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Wilson John

THE WORKS

OF

PROFESSOR WILSON

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

EDITED BY HIS SON-IN-LAW

PROFESSOR FERRIER

VOL. XII.

POEMS

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
MDCCCLVIII

THE

POETICAL WORKS

OF

PROFESSOR WILSON

A NEW EDITION

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
MDCCCLVIII

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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE "Isle of Palms," and about one half of the miscellaneous poems, were first published in the spring of 1812. They were dedicated to Professors Jardine and Young of the University of Glasgow, under whom their author had studied. The "City of the Plague," and the greater part of the other miscellaneous poems, were first published in the spring of 1816. In the collected edition of 1825, inscribed to Wilson's "best and dearest friend, Alexander Blair," a good many new compositions (some of which had appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine*) were inserted. The four following pieces now appear for the first time in a collected form:—The prize poem, which obtained the "Newdigate" at Oxford, in 1806, the first year of its establishment, the composition being limited at that time to fifty lines; "Edderline's Dream," which was contributed in 1829 to an annual, edited by Mr Allan Cunningham, entitled the *Anniversary;* "An Evening in Furness Abbey," which appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* (September 1829); and "Unimore," which was published in the same journal (August 1831.) These, and also the miscellaneous poems of edition 1825, are marked with an asterisk in the table of contents.

POEMS.

THE ISLE OF PALMS.

CANTO FIRST.

It is the midnight hour :—the beauteous Sea,
Calm as the cloudless heaven, the heaven discloses,
While many a sparkling star, in quiet glee,
Far down within the watery sky reposes.
As if the Ocean's heart were stirred
With inward life, a sound is heard,
Like that of dreamer murmuring in his sleep ;
'Tis partly the billow, and partly the air
That lies like a garment floating fair
Above the happy deep.
The sea, I ween, cannot be fanned
By evening freshness from the land,
For the land it is far away ;
But God hath willed that the sky-born breeze
In the centre of the loneliest seas
Should ever sport and play.
The mighty Moon she sits above,
Encircled with a zone of love,
A zone of dim and tender light
That makes her wakeful eye more bright :
She seems to shine with a sunny ray,
And the night looks like a mellowed day !

The gracious Mistress of the Main
Hath now an undisturbed reign,
And from her silent throne looks down,
As upon children of her own,
On the waves that lend their gentle breast
In gladness for her couch of rest!

My spirit sleeps amid the calm
The sleep of a new delight;
And hopes that she ne'er may awake again,
But for ever hang o'er the lovely main,
And adore the lovely night.
Scarce conscious of an earthly frame,
She glides away like a lambent flame,
And in her bliss she sings;
Now touching softly the Ocean's breast,
Now mid the stars she lies at rest,
As if she sailed on wings!
Now bold as the brightest star that glows
More brightly since at first it rose,
Looks down on the far-off Flood,
And there all breathless and alone,
As the sky where she soars were a world of her own,
She mocketh that gentle Mighty One
As he lies in his quiet mood.
"Art thou," she breathes, "the Tyrant grim
That scoffs at human prayers,
Answering with prouder roar the while,
As it rises from some lonely isle,
Through groans raised wild, the hopeless hymn
Of shipwrecked mariners?
Oh! Thou art harmless as a child
Weary with joy, and reconciled
For sleep to change its play;
And now that night hath stayed thy race,
Smiles wander o'er thy placid face
As if thy dreams were gay."—

And can it be that for me alone
The Main and Heavens are spread?
Oh! whither, in this holy hour,
Have those fair Creatures fled,
To whom the ocean-plains are given
As clouds possess their native heaven?

The tiniest boat, that ever sailed
Upon an inland lake,
Might through this sea without a fear
Her silent journey take,
Though the helmsman slept as if on land,
And the oar had dropped from the rower's hand.
How like a monarch would she glide,
While the husht billow kissed her side
With low and lulling tone,
Some stately Ship, that from afar
Shone sudden, like a rising star,
With all her bravery on!
List! how in murmurs of delight
The blessèd airs of Heaven invite
The joyous Bark to pass one night
Within their still domain!
O grief! that yonder gentle Moon,
Whose smiles for ever fade so soon,
Should waste such smiles in vain.
Haste! haste! before the moonshine dies
Dissolved amid the morning skies,
While yet the silvery glory lies
Above the sparkling foam;
Bright mid surrounding brightness, Thou,
Scattering fresh beauty from thy prow,
In pomp and splendour come!

And lo! upon the murmuring waves
A glorious Shape appearing!
A broad-winged Vessel, through the shower
Of glimmering lustre steering!
As if the beauteous ship enjoyed
The beauty of the sea,
She lifteth up her stately head
And saileth joyfully.
A lovely path before her lies,
A lovely path behind;
She sails amid the loveliness
Like a thing with heart and mind.
Fit pilgrim through a scene so fair
Slowly she beareth on;
A glorious phantom of the deep,
Risen up to meet the Moon.
The Moon bids her tenderest radiance fall
On her wavy streamer and snow-white wings,

And the quiet voice of the rocking sea
To cheer the gliding vision sings.
Oh ! ne'er did sky and water blend
In such a holy sleep,
Or bathe in brighter quietude
A roamer of the deep.
So far the peaceful soul of Heaven
Hath settled on the sea,
It seems as if this weight of calm
Were from eternity.
O World of Waters ! the steadfast earth
Ne'er lay entranced like Thee !

Is she a vision wild and bright,
That sails amid the still moonlight
At the dreaming soul's command ?
A vessel borne by magic gales,
All rigged with gossamery sails,
And bound for Fairyland ?
Ah ! no !—an earthly freight she bears,
Of joys and sorrows, hopes and fears ;
And lonely as she seems to be,
Thus left by herself on the moonlight sea
In loneliness that rolls,
She hath a constant company,
In sleep, or waking revelry,
Five hundred human souls !
Since first she sailed from fair England,
Three moons her path have cheered ;
And another lights her lovelier lamp
Since the Cape hath disappeared.
For an Indian Isle she shapes her way,
With constant mind both night and day
She seems to hold her home in view,
And sails, as if the path she knew ;
So calm and stately is her motion
Across the unfathomed trackless ocean.

And well, glad Vessel ! mayest thou stem
The tide with lofty breast,
And lift thy queen-like diadem
O'er these thy realms of rest :
For a thousand beings, now far away,
Behold thee in their sleep,

And hush their beating hearts to pray
That a calm may clothe the deep.
When dimly descending behind the sea
From the Mountain Isle of Liberty,
Oh! many a sigh pursued thy vanished sail:
And oft an eager crowd will stand
With straining gaze on the Indian strand,
Thy wonted gleam to hail.
For thou art laden with Beauty and Youth,
With Honour bold and spotless Truth,
With fathers, who have left in a home of rest
Their infants smiling at the breast,
With children who have bade their parents farewell,
Or who go to the land where their parents dwell.
God speed thy course, thou gleam of delight!
From rock and tempest clear;
Till signal gun from friendly height
Proclaim, with thundering cheer,
To joyful groups on the harbour bright,
That the good ship HOPE is near!

Is no one on the silent deck
Save the helmsman who sings for a breeze,
And the sailors who pace their midnight watch,
Still as the slumbering seas?
Yes! side by side, and hand in hand,
Close to the prow two figures stand,
Their shadows never stir,
And fondly as the moon doth rest
Upon the Ocean's gentle breast,
So fond they look on her.
They gaze and gaze till the beauteous orb
Seems made for them alone:
They feel as if their home were Heaven,
And the earth a dream that hath flown.
Softly they lean on each other's breast,
In holy bliss reposing,
Like two fair clouds to the vernal air,
In folds of beauty closing.
The tear down their glad faces rolls,
And a silent prayer is in their souls,
While the voice of awakened memory,
Like a low and plaintive melody,
Sings in their hearts,—a mystic voice,
That bids them tremble and rejoice.

And Faith, who oft had lost her power
In the darkness of the midnight hour,
When the planets had rolled afar,
Now stirs in their soul with a joyful strife,
Embued with a genial spirit of life
By the Moon and the Morning-Star.

A lovelier vision in the moonlight stands,
Than Bard e'er wooed in fairy lands,
Or Faith with tranced eye adored,
Floating around our dying Lord.
Her silent face is saintly-pale,
And sadness shades it like a veil :
A consecrated nun she seems,
Whose waking thoughts are deep as dreams,
And in her hushed and dim abode
For ever dwell upon her God,
Though the still fount of tears and sighs,
And human sensibilities !
Well may the Moon delight to shed
Her softest radiance round that head,
And mellow the cool ocean-air
That lifts by fits her sable hair.
These mild and melancholy eyes
Are dear unto the starry skies,
As the dim effusion of their rays
Blends with the glimmering light that plays
O'er the blue heavens, and snowy clouds,
The cloud-like sails, and radiant shrouds.
Fair creature ! Thou dost seem to be
Some wandering spirit of the sea,
That dearly loves the gleam of sails,
And o'er them breathes propitious gales.
Hither thou comest, for one wild hour,
With him thy sinless paramour,
To gaze, while the wearied sailors sleep,
On this beautiful phantom of the deep,
That seemed to rise with the rising Moon.
—But the Queen of Night will be sinking soon,
Then will you, like two breaking waves,
Sink softly to your coral caves,
Or, noiseless as the falling dew,
Melt into Heaven's delicious blue.

Nay! wrong her not, that Virgin bright!
Her face is bathed in lovelier light
Than ever flowed from eyes
Of Ocean Nymph, or Sylph of Air!
The tearful gleam, that trembles there,
From human dreams must rise.
Let the Mermaid rest in her sparry cell,
Her sea-green ringlets braiding!
The Sylph in viewless ether dwell,
In clouds her beauty shading!
My soul devotes her music wild
To one who is an earthly child,
But who, wandering through the midnight hour,
Far from the shade of earthly bower,
Bestows a tender loveliness,
A deeper, holier quietness,
On the moonlight Heaven, and Ocean hoar,
So quiet and so fair before.
Yet why does a helpless maiden roam,
Mid stranger souls, and far from home,
Across the faithless deep?
Oh! fitter far that her gentle mind
In some sweet inland vale should find
An undisturbed sleep!

So was it once. Her childish years
Like clouds pass'd o'er her head,
When life is all one rosy smile, or tears
Of natural grief, forgotten soon as shed.
O'er her own mountains, like a bird
Glad wandering from its nest,
When the glossy hues of the sunny spring
Are dancing on its breast,
With a winged glide this maiden would rove,
An innocent phantom of beauty and love.
Far from the haunts of men she grew
By the side of a lonesome tower,
Like some solitary mountain-flower,
Whose veil of wiry dew
Is only touched by the gales that breathe
O'er the blossoms of the fragrant heath,
And in its silence melts away
With those sweet things too pure for earthly day.
Blest was the lore that Nature taught
The infant's happy mind,

Even when each light and happy thought
Passed onwards like the wind,
Nor longer seemed to linger there
Than the whispering sound in her raven-hair.
Well was she known to each mountain-stream,
As its own voice or the fond moonbeam
That o'er its music played:
The loneliest caves her footsteps heard,
In lake and tarn oft nightly stirred
The Maiden's ghost-like shade.
But she hath bidden a last farewell
To lake and mountain, stream and dell,
And fresh have blown the gales
For many a mournful night and day,
Wafting the tall Ship far away
From her dear native Wales.

And must these eyes,—so soft and mild,
As angel's bright, as fairy's wild,
Swimming in lustrous dew,
Now sparkling lively, gay, and glad,
And now their spirit melting sad
In smiles of gentlest blue,—
Oh! must these eyes be steeped in tears,
Bedimmed with dreams of future years,
Of what may yet betide
An Orphan-Maid!—for in the night
She oft hath started with affright,
To find herself a bride;
A bride oppressed with fear and shame,
And bearing not Fitz-Owen's name.
This fearful dream oft haunts her bed,
For she hath heard of maidens sold,
In the innocence of thoughtless youth,
To Guilt and Age for gold;
Of English maids who pined away
Beyond the Eastern Main,
Who smiled, when first they trod that shore,
But never smiled again.
In dreams is she such wretched Maid,
An Orphan, helpless, sold, betrayed!
And, when the dream hath fled,
In waking thought she still retains
The memory of these wildering pains,
In strange mysterious dread.

Yet oft will happier dreams arise
Before her charmèd view,
And the powerful beauty of the skies
Makes her believe them true.
For who, when nought is heard around,
But the great Ocean's solemn sound,
Feels not as if the Eternal God
Were speaking in that dread abode?
An answering voice seems kindly given
From the multitude of stars in Heaven:
And oft a smile of moonlight fair,
To perfect peace hath changed despair.
Low as we are, we blend our fate
With things so beautifully great,
And though opprest with heaviest grief,
From Nature's bliss we draw relief,
Assured that God's most gracious eye
Beholds us in our misery,
And sends mild sound and lovely sight,
To change that misery to delight.
Such is thy faith, O sainted Maid!
Pensive and pale, but not afraid
Of Ocean or of Sky,
Though thou ne'er may'st see the land again,
And though awful be the lonely Main,
No fears hast thou to die.
Whate'er betide of weal or woe,
When the waves are asleep, or the tempests blow,
Thou wilt bear with calm devotion;
For duly every night and morn,
Sweeter than Mermaid's strains are borne
Thy hymns along the Ocean.

And who is He that fondly presses
Close to his heart the silken tresses
That hide her softened eyes,
Whose heart her heaving bosom meets,
And through the midnight silence beats
To feel her rising sighs?
Worthy the Youth, I ween, to rest
On the fair swellings of her breast;
Worthy to hush her inmost fears,
And kiss away her struggling tears:
For never grovelling spirit stole
A woman's unpolluted soul!

To her the vestal fire is given ;
And only fire drawn pure from Heaven
Can on Love's holy shrine descend,
And there in clouds of fragrance blend.
Well do I know that stately Youth !
The broad daylight of cloudless truth
Like a sunbeam bathes his face ;
Though silent, still a gracious smile,
That rests upon his eyes the while,
Bestows a speaking grace.
That smile hath might of magic art,
To sway at will the stoniest heart,
As a ship obeys the gale ;
And when his silver voice is heard,
The coldest blood is warmly stirred,
As at some glorious tale.
The loftiest spirit never saw
This Youth without a sudden awe ;
But vain the transient feeling strove
Against the stealing power of love.
Soon as they felt the tremor cease,
He seemed the very heart of peace ;
Majestic to the bold and high,
Yet calm and beauteous to a woman's eye !

To him, a mountain Youth, was known
The wailing tempest's dreariest tone.
He knew the shriek of wizard caves,
And the trampling fierce of howling waves.
The mystic voice of the lonely night,
He had often drunk with a strange delight,
And looked on the clouds as they roll'd on high,
Till with them he sailed on the sailing sky.
And thus hath he learned to wake the lyre,
With something of a bard-like fire ;
Can tell in high impassioned song,
Of worlds that to the Bard belong,
And, till they feel his kindling breath,
To others still and dark as death.
Yet oft, I ween, in gentler mood
A human kindness hushed his blood,
And sweetly blended earth-born sighs
With the Bard's romantic ecstasies.
The living world was dear to him,

And in his waking hours more bright it seemed,
More touching far, than when his fancy dreamed
Of heavenly bowers, th' abode of Seraphim :
And gladly from her wild sojourn
Mid haunts dim-shadowed in the realms of mind,
Even like a wearied dove that flies for rest
Back o'er long fields of air unto her nest,
His longing spirit homewards would return
To meet once more the smile of human kind.
And when at last a human soul he found,
Pure as the thought of purity,—more mild
Than in its slumber seems a dreaming child ;
When on his spirit stole the mystic sound,
The voice, whose music sad no mortal ear
But his can rightly understand and hear,
When a subduing smile like moonlight shone
On him for ever, and for him alone,
Why should he seek this lower world to leave !
For, whether now he love to joy or grieve,
A friend he hath for sorrow or delight,
Who lends fresh beauty to the morning light,
The tender stars in tenderer dimness shrouds,
And glorifies the Moon among her clouds.

How would he gaze with reverent eye
Upon that meek and pensive maid,
Then fix his looks upon the sky
With moving lips as if he prayed !
Unto his sight bedimmed with tears,
How beautiful the Saint appears,—
Oh, all unlike a creature formed of clay !
The blessed angels with delight
Might hail her "Sister !" She is bright
And innocent as they.
Scarce dared he then that form to love
A solemn impulse from above
All earthly hopes forbade,
And with a pure and holy flame,
As if in truth from Heaven she came,
He gazed upon the maid.
His beating heart, thus filled with awe,
In her the guardian spirit saw
Of all his future years ;
And when he listened to her breath

So spiritual, nor pain nor death
Seemed longer worth his fears.
She loved him ! She, the Child of Heaven !
And God would surely make
The soul to whom that love was given
More perfect for her sake.
Each look, each word, of one so good
Devoutly he obeyed,
And trusted that a gracious eye
Would ever guide his destiny,
For whom in holy solitude
A kneeling Angel prayed.

Those days of tranquil joy are fled,
And tears of deep distress
From night to morn hath Mary shed :
And, say ! when sorrow bowed her head
Did he then love her less ?
Ah no ! more touching beauty rose
Through the dim paleness of her woes,
Than when her cheek did bloom
With joy's own lustre : something there,
A saint-like calm, a deep repose,
Made her look like a spirit fair,
New risen from the tomb.
For ever in his heart shall dwell
The voice with which she said farewell
To the fading English shore ;
It dropped like dew upon his ear,
And for the while he ceased to hear
The sea-wind's freshening roar.
" To thee I trust my sinless child :
And therefore am I reconciled
To bear my lonely lot,
The Gracious One, who loves the good,
For her will smooth the Ocean wild,
Nor in her aged solitude
A parent be forgot."
The last words these her mother spake,
Sobbing as if her heart would break,
Upon the cold sea-shore,
When onwards with the favouring gale,
Glad to be free, in pride of sail
Th' impatient Vessel bore.

Oh! could she now in magic glass
Behold the wingèd Glory pass
With a slow and cloud-like motion,
While, as they melted on her eye,
She scarce should ken the peaceful sky
From the still more peaceful Ocean!
And it may be such dreams are given
In mercy by indulgent Heaven,
To solace them that mourn:
The absent bless our longing sight,
The future shows than truth more bright,
And phantoms of expired delight
Most passing sweet return.
Mother! behold thy child: How still
Her upward face! She thinks on thee:
Oh! thou canst never gaze thy fill!
How beautiful such piety!
There, in her lover's guardian arms
She rests: and all the wild alarms
Of waves or winds are hushed, no more to rise.
Of thee, and thee alone, she thinks:
See! on her knees thy daughter sinks:
Sure God will bless the prayer that lights such eyes!
Didst thou e'er think thy child so fair?
The rapture of her granted prayer
Hath breathed that awful beauty through her face:
Once more upon the deck she stands,
Slowly unclasps her pious hands,
And brightening smiles, assured of heavenly grace.

Oh, blessed pair! and, while I gaze,
As beautiful as blest!
Emblem of all your future days
Seems now the Ocean's rest!
Beyond the blue depths of the sky
The Tempests sleep;—and there must lie,
Like baleful spirits barred from realms of bliss;
But singing airs, and gleams of light,
And birds of calm, all glancing bright,
Must hither in their gladness come—
—Where shall they find a fitter home
Than a night-scene fair as this?
And when, her fairy voyage past,
The happy Ship is moored at last
In the loved haven of her Indian Isle,

How dear to you will be the beams
Of the silent Moon! What touching dreams
Your musing hearts beguile!
Though haply then her radiance fall
On some low mansion's flowery wall,
Far up an inland vale,
Yet then the sheeted mast will tower,
Her shrouds all rustling like a shower,
And, melting as wild music's power,
Low pipe the sea-born gale.
Each star will speak the tenderest things,
And when the clouds expand their wings,
All parting like a fleet,
Your own belovèd Ship, I ween,
Will foremost in the van be seen,
And, rising loud and sweet,
The sailor's joyful shouts be heard,
Such as the midnight silence stirred
When the wished-for breezes blew,
And, instant as the loud commands,
Sent upwards from a hundred hands
The broad sails rose unto the sky,
And from her slumbers suddenly
The Ship like lightning flew.

But list! a low and moaning sound
At distance heard, like a spirit's song,
And now it reigns above, around,
As if it called the Ship along.
The Moon is sunk; and a clouded grey
Declares that her course is run,
And like a God who brings the day,
Up mounts the glorious Sun.
Soon as his light has warmed the seas,
From the parting cloud fresh blows the Breeze;
And that is the spirit whose well-known song
Makes the vessel to sail in joy along.
No fears hath she;—Her giant-form
O'er wrathful surge, through blackening storm,
Majestically calm would go
Mid the deep darkness white as snow!
But gently now the small waves glide
Like playful lambs o'er a mountain's side.
So stately her bearing, so proud her array,
The Main she will traverse for ever and aye.

Many ports will exult at the gleam of her mast
—Hush! hush! thou vain dreamer! this hour is her last.
Five hundred souls in one instant of dread
Are hurried o'er the deck;
And fast the miserable Ship
Becomes a lifeless wreck.
Her keel hath struck on a hidden rock,
Her planks are torn asunder,
And down come her masts with a reeling shock,
And a hideous crash like thunder.
Her sails are draggled in the brine
That gladdened late the skies,
And her pendant that kissed the fair moonshine
Down many a fathom lies.
Her beauteous sides, whose rainbow hues
Gleamed softly from below,
And flung a warm and sunny flush
O'er the wreaths of murmuring snow,
To the coral rocks are hurrying down
To sleep amid colours as bright as their own.

Oh! many a dream was in the Ship
An hour before her death;
And sights of home with sighs disturbed
The sleepers' long-drawn breath.
Instead of the murmur of the sea
The sailor heard the humming tree
Alive through all its leaves,
The hum of the spreading sycamore
That grows before his cottage-door,
And the swallow's song in the eaves.
His arms enclosed a blooming boy,
Who listened with tears of sorrow and joy
To the dangers his father had passed;
And his wife—by turns she wept and smiled,
As she looked on the father of her child
Returned to her heart at last.
—He wakes at the vessel's sudden roll,
And the rush of waters is in his soul.
Astounded the reeling deck he paces,
Mid hurrying forms and ghastly faces;—
The whole Ship's crew are there!
Wailings around and overhead,
Brave spirits stupified or dead,
And madness and despair.

Leave not the wreck, thou cruel Boat,
While yet 'tis thine to save,
And angel-hands will bid thee float
Uninjured o'er the wave,
Though whirlpools yawn across thy way,
And storms, impatient for their prey,
Around thee fiercely rave!
Vain all the prayers of pleading eyes,
Of outcry loud, and humble sighs,
Hands clasped, or wildly tossed on high
To bless or curse in agony!
Despair and resignation vain!
Away like a strong-winged bird she flies,
That heeds not human miseries,
And far off in the sunshine dies
Like a wave of the restless main.
Hush! hush! Ye wretches left behind!
Silence becomes the brave, resigned
To unexpected doom.
How quiet the once noisy crowd!
The sails now serve them for a shroud,
And the sea-cave is their tomb.
And where is that loveliest Being gone?
Hope not that she is saved alone,
Immortal though such beauty seemed to be.
She, and the Youth that loved her too,
Went down with the ship and her gallant crew—
No favourites hath the sea.

Now is the Ocean's bosom bare,
Unbroken as the floating air;
The Ship hath melted quite away,
Like a struggling dream at break of day.
No image meets my wandering eye
But the new-risen sun, and the sunny sky.
Though the night-shades are gone, yet a vapour dull
Bedims the waves so beautiful;
While a low and melancholy moan
Mourns for the glory that hath flown.
Oh! that the wild and wailing strain
Were a dream that murmurs in my brain!
What happiness would then be mine,
When my eyes, as they felt the morning shine,
Instead of the unfathomed Ocean-grave
Should behold Winander's peaceful wave,

And the Isles that love her loving breast,
Each brooding like a Halcyon's nest.
It may not be :—too well I know
The real doom from fancied woe,
The black and dismal hue.
Yea, many a visage wan and pale
Will hang at midnight o'er my tale,
And weep that it is true.

CANTO SECOND.

O Heavenly Queen! by Mariners beloved!
Refulgent Moon! when in the cruel sea
Down sank yon fair Ship to her coral grave,
Where didst thou linger then? Sure it behoved
A Spirit strong and pitiful like thee
At that dread hour thy worshippers to save;
Nor let the Glory where thy tenderest light,
Forsaking even the clouds, with pleasure lay,
Pass, like a cloud which none deplores, away,
No more to bless the empire of the Night.
How oft to thee have home-sick sailors poured
Upon their midnight-watch, no longer dull
When thou didst smile, hymns wild and beautiful,
Worthy the radiant Angel they adored!
And are such hymnings breathed to thee in vain?
Gleam'st thou, as if delighted with the strain,
And won by it the pious bark to keep
In joy for ever?—till at once behind
A cloud thou sailest,—and a roaring wind
Hath sunk her in the deep!
Or, though the zephyr scarcely blow,
Down to the bottom must she go
With all who wake or sleep,
Ere the slumberer from his dream can start,
Or the hymn hath left the singers heart!
Oh! sure, if ever mortal prayer
Were heard where thou and thy bright stars abide,
So many gallant spirits had not died
Thus mournfully in beauty and in prime!

But from the sky had shone an arm sublime,
To bless the worship of that Virgin fair,
And, only seen by Faith's uplifted eye,
The wretched vessel gently drifted by
The fatal rock, and to the crowded shore,
In triumph and in pride the expected glory bore.

Oh vain belief! most beauteous as thou art,
Thy heavenly visage hides a cruel heart.
When Death and Danger, Terror and Dismay,
Are madly struggling on the dismal Ocean,
With heedless smile and calm unaltered motion,
Onward thou glidest through the milky way,
Nor, in thy own immortal beauty blest,
Hear'st dying mortals rave themselves to rest.
Yet when this night thou mount'st thy starry throne,
Brightening to sun-like glory in thy bliss,
Wilt thou not then thy once-loved Vessel miss,
And wish her happy, now that she is gone?
—Was that wild sound a human cry,
The voice of one more loth to die
Than they who round him sleep?
Or of a Spirit in the sky,
A Demon in the deep?
No sea-bird, through the darkness sailing,
E'er uttered such a doleful wailing,
Foreboding the near blast:
If from a living thing it came,
It sure must have a spectral frame,
And soon its soul must part:—
That groan broke from a bursting heart,
The bitterest and the last.

The Figure moves! It is alive!
None but its wretched self survive,
Yea! drowned are all the crew!
Ghosts are they underneath the wave,
And he, whom Ocean deigned to save,
Stands there most ghost-like too.
Alone upon a rock he stands
Amid the waves, and wrings his hands,
And lifts to Heaven his steadfast eye,
With a wild upbraiding agony.
He sends his soul through the lonesome air
To God: but God hears not his prayer;

For, soon as his words from the wretch depart,
Cold they return on his baffled heart.
He flings himself down on his rocky tomb,
And madly laughs at his horrible doom.
With smiles the Main is overspread,
As if in mockery of the dead;
And upward when he turns his sight,
The unfeeling Sun is shining bright,
And strikes him with a sickening light.
While a fainting-fit his soul bedims,
He thinks that a Ship before him swims,
A gallant Ship, all filled with gales,
One radiant gleam of snowy sails—
His senses return, and he looks in vain
O'er the empty silence of the Main!
No Ship is there, with radiant gleam,
Whose shadow sailed throughout his dream:
Not even one rueful plank is seen
To tell that a vessel hath ever been
Beneath these lonely skies:
But sea-birds he oft had seen before
Following the ship in hush or roar,
The loss of their resting-mast deplore
With wild and dreary cries.

What brought him here he cannot tell;
Doubt and confusion darken all his soul,
While glimmering truth more dreadful makes the gloom:
Why hath the Ocean that black hideous swell?
And in his ears why doth that dismal toll
For ever sound,—as if a city bell
Wailed for a funeral passing to the tomb?
Some one hath died, and buried is this day;
A hoary-headed man, or stripling gay,
Or haply some sweet maid, who was a bride,
And, ere her head upon his bosom lay
Who deemed her all his own,—the Virgin died!
Why starts the wildered dreamer at the sound,
And casts his haggard eyes around?
The utter agony hath seized him now,
For Memory drives him, like a slave, to know
What Madness would conceal:—His own dear Maid,
She, who he thought could never die, is dead.
"Drowned!"—still the breaking billows mutter,—"drowned!"
With anguish loud was her death-bed!

Nor e'er,—wild wish of utmost woe!
Shall her fair corse be found.
Oft had he sworn with faithless breath,
That his love for the Maid was strong as death,
By the holy Sun he swore;
The Sun upon the Ocean smiles,
And, with a sudden gleam, reviles
His vows as light as air.
Yet soon he flings, with a sudden start,
That gnawing frenzy from his heart,
For long in sooth he strove,
When the waters were booming in his brain,
And his life was clogged with a sickening pain,
To save his lady-love.

How long it seems since that dear night,
When gazing on the wan moonlight
He and his own betrothèd stood,
Nor fear'd the harmless ocean-flood!
He feels as if many and many a day,
Since that bright hour, had passed away;
The dim remembrance of some joy
In which he revelled when a boy.
The crew's dumb misery and his own,
When lingeringly the ship went down,
Even like some mournful tale appears,
By wandering sailor told in other years.
Yet still he knows that this is all delusion,
For how could he for months and years have lain
A wretched thing upon the cruel Main,
Calm though it seem to be? Would gracious Heaven
Set free his spirit from this dread confusion,
Oh, how devoutly would his thanks be given
To Jesus ere he died! But tortured so,
He dare not pray beneath his weight of woe,
Lest he should feel when about to die,
By God deserted utterly,
He cannot die: Though he longs for death,
Stronger and stronger grows his breath,
And hopeless woe the spring of being feeds;
He faints not, though his knell seems rung,
But lives, as if to life he clung,
And stronger as he bleeds.
But the weariness of wasting grief
Hath brought at last its own relief:

Each sense is dulled! He lies at last
As if the parting shock were past.
He sleeps!—Prolong his haunted rest,
O God!—for now the wretch is blest.
A fair romantic Island, crowned
With a glow of blossomed trees,
And underneath bestrewn with flowers,
The happy dreamer sees.
A stream comes dancing from a mount,
Down its fresh and lustrous side,
Then, tamed into a quiet pool,
Is scarcely seen to glide.
Like fairy sprites, a thousand birds
Glance by on golden wing,
Birds lovelier than the lovely hues
Of the bloom wherein they sing.
Upward he lifts his wondering eyes,
Nor yet believes that even the skies
So passing fair can be;
And lo! yon gleam of emerald light,
For human gaze too dazzling bright,
Is that indeed the Sea?

Adorned with all her pomp and pride,
Long fluttering flags, and pendants wide,
He sees a stately vessel ride
At anchor in a bay,
Where never waves by storm were driven,
Shaped like the Moon when she is young in heaven,
Or melting in a cloud that stops her way.
Her masts tower nobly from the rocking deep,
Tall as the palm-trees on the steep,
And, burning mid their crests so darkly green,
Her meteor-glories all abroad are seen,
Wakening the forests from their solemn sleep;
While suddenly the cannon's sound
Rolls through the caverned glens, and groves profound,
And never-dying echoes roar around.
Shaded with branching palm, the sign of peace,
Canoes and skiffs like lightning shoot along,
Countless as waves there sporting on the seas;
While still from those that lead the van, a song,
Whose chorus rends the inland cliffs afar,
Tells that advance before that unarmed throng,

Princes and chieftains, with a fearless smile,
And outstretched arms, to welcome to their Isle
That gallant Ship of War.
And glad are they who therein sail,
Once more to breathe the balmy gale,
To kiss the steadfast strand :
They round the world are voyaging,
And who can tell their suffering
Since last they saw the land ?

But that bright pageant will not stay :
Palms, plumes, and ensigns melt away,
Island, and ship !—Though utter be the change
(For on a rock he seems to lie
All naked to the burning sky)
He doth not think it strange.
While in his memory faint recallings swim,
He fain would think it is a dream
That thus distracts his view,
Until some unimagined pain
Shoots shivering through his troubled brain ;
—Though dreadful, all is true.
But what to him is anguish now,
Though it burn in his blood, and his heart, and his brow,
For ever from morn to night ?
For lo ! an Angel shape descends,
As soft and silent as moonlight,
And o'er the dreamer bends.
She cannot be an earthly child,
Yet, when the Vision sweetly smiled,
The light that there did play
Reminded him, he knew not why,
Of one beloved in infancy,
But now far, far away.

Disturbed by fluttering joy, he wakes,
And feels a death-like shock ;
For, harder even than in his dream,
His bed is a lonely rock.
Poor wretch ! he dares not open his eye,
For he dreads the beauty of the sky,
And the useless unavailing breeze
That he hears upon the happy seas.
A voice glides sweetly through his heart,
The voice of one that mourns ;

Yet it hath a gladsome melody—
Dear God! the dream returns!
A gentle kiss breathes o'er his cheek,
A kiss of murmuring sighs;
It wanders o'er his brow, and falls
Like light upon his eyes.
Through that lóng kiss he dimly sees,
All bathed in smiles and tears,
A well-known face; and from those lips
A well-known voice he hears.
With a doubtful look he scans the Maid,
As if half-delighted, half-afraid,
Then bows his wildered head,
And, with deep groans, he strives to pray
That Heaven would drive the fiend away,
That haunts his dying bed.
Again he dares to view the air:
The beauteous ghost yet lingers there,
Veiled in a spotless shroud:
Breathing in tones subdued and low,
Bent o'er him like Heaven's radiant bow,
And still as evening cloud.

"Art thou a phantom of the brain?"
He cries, "a mermaid from the main?
A seraph from the sky?
Or art thou a fiend with a seraph's smile,
Come here to mock on this horrid Isle,
My dying agony?"—
Had he but seen what touching sadness fell
On that fair creature's cheek while thus he spoke,
Had heard the stifled sigh that slowly broke
From her untainted bosom's lab'ring swell,
He scarce had hoped, that at the throne of grace
Such cruel words could e'er have been forgiven,
The impious sin of doubting such a face,
Of speaking thus of Heaven.
Weeping, she wrings his dripping hair
That hangs across his cheek;
And leaves a hundred kisses there,
But not one word can speak.
In bliss she listens to his breath:
Ne'er murmured so the breast of death!
Alas! sweet one! what joy can give
Fond-cherished thoughts like these!

For how mayest thou and thy lover live
In the centre of the seas?
Or vainly to your sorrows seek for rest,
On a rock where never verdure grew,
Too wild even for the wild sea-mew
To build her slender nest!

Sublime is the faith of a lonely soul,
In pain and trouble cherished;
Sublime the spirit of hope that lives,
When earthly hope has perished.
And where doth that blest faith abide?
O! not in Man's stern nature: human pride
Inhabits there, and oft by virtue led,
Pride though it be, it doth a glory shed,
That makes the world we mortal beings tread,
In chosen spots, resplendent as the Heaven!
But to yon gentle Maiden turn,
Who never for herself doth mourn,
And own that faith's undying urn
Is but to woman given.
Now that the shade of sorrow falls
Across her life, and duty calls,
Her spirit burns with a fervent glow,
And stately through the gloom of woe
Behold her altered form arise,
Like a priestess at a sacrifice.
The touch of earth hath left no taint
Of weakness in the fearless saint.
Like clouds, all human passions roll,
At the breath of devotion, from her soul,
And God looks down with a gleam of grace,
On the stillness of her heavenward face,
Just paler in her grief.
While, hark! like one who God adores,
Such words she o'er her lover pours,
As give herself relief.

"Oh! look again on her who speaks
To thee, and bathes thy sallow cheeks
With many a human tear!
No cruel thing beside thee leans,
Thou knowest what thy Mary means,
Thy own true love is here.

Open thine eyes ! thy beauteous eyes !
For mercy smile on me !
Speak !—but one word ! one little word !
'Tis all I ask of thee.
If these eyes would give one transient gleam,
To cheer this dark and dreadful dream,
If, while I kiss thy cheek,
These dear, dear lips, alas ! so pale,
Before their parting spirit fail,
One low farewell would speak,—
This rock so hard would be a bed
Of down unto thy Mary's head,
And gently would we glide away,
Fitz-Owen ! to that purer day
Of which thou once didst sing ;
Like birds, that, rising from the foam,
Seek on some lofty cliff their home,
On storm-despising wing.
Yes ! that thou hear'st thy Mary's voice,
That lovely smile declares !
Here let us in each other's arms
Dissolve our life in prayers.
I see in that uplifted eye,
That thou art not afraid to die ;
For ever brave wert thou.
Oh ! press me closer to thy soul,
And, while yet we hear the Ocean roll,
Breathe deep the marriage vow !
We hoped far other days to see ;
But the will of God be done !
My husband ! behold yon pile of clouds
Like a city, round the Sun :
Beyond these clouds, ere the phantoms part,
Thou wilt lean in bliss on my loving heart."—

Sweet seraph ! lovely was thy form,
When, shrouded in the misty storm
That swept o'er Snowdon's side,
The Cambrian shepherd, through the gloom,
Like a spirit rising from the tomb,
With awe beheld thee glide ;
And lovely wert thou, Child of Light !
When, gazing on the starry night
Within Llanberris Lake,

Thy spirit felt, in a hush like death,
The fading earth's last-whispered breath
The holy scene forsake.
Oh! lovelier still, when thy noiseless tread
Around thy aged mother's bed
Fell soft as snow on snow,
When thy yearning heart repressed its sighs,
And from thy never-closing eyes
Forbade the tears to flow.
But now unto thy looks are given
The beauty and the power of Heaven:
The sternness of this dismal Isle
Is softened by thy saintly smile,
And he, who lay like a madman, bound
In fetters of anguish to the ground,
And heard and saw, in fearful strife,
The sounds and the sights of unearthly life,
Now opens his eyes that glisten mild
Like the gladsome eyes of a wakened child,
For the hideous trance is fled;
And his soul is filled with the glory bright,
That plays like a wreath of halo-light
Around his Mary's head.

Most awful is the perfect rest
That sits within her eye,
Awful her pallid face imprest
With the seal of victory.
Triumphant o'er the ghastly dreams
That haunt the parting soul,
She looks like a bird of calm, that floats
Unmoved when thunders roll,
And gives to the storm as gentle notes
As e'er through sunshine stole.
Her lover leans on her quiet breast,
And his heart like hers is still:
Ne'er martyred saints more meekly bowed
To their Creator's will.
As calm they sit, as they had steered
To some little favourite Isle,
To mark upon the peaceful waves
The parting sunbeams smile;
As if the lightly feathered oar
In an hour could take them to the shore
Where friends and parents dwell:

But far, alas! from such shore are they,
And of friends, who for their safety pray,
Have ta'en a last farewell.

But why thus gleams Fitz-Owen's eye?
Why bursts his eager speech?
Lo! as if brought by angel hands
Uninjured on the beach,
With oars and sails a vessel lies:
Salvation from the gracious skies!
He fears it is a dream; that woe
Hath surely crazed his brain:
He drives the phantom from his gaze,
But the boat appears again.
It is the same that used to glide
When the wind had fallen low,
Like a child along its parent's side,
Around the guardian prow
Of the mighty ship whose shadow lay
Unmoved upon the watery way.
In the madness of that dismal hour,
When the shrieking Ship went down,
This little boat to the rocky Isle
Hath drifted all alone.
And there she lies! the oars are laid
As by the hand of pleasure,
Preparing on the quiet tide
To beat a gladsome measure.
The dripping sail is careless tied
Around the painted mast,
And a gandy flag with purple glows,
Hung up in sportive joy by those
Whose sports and joys are past.

So lightly doth this little boat
Upon the scarce-touched billows float,
So careless doth she seem to be
Thus left by herself on the homeless sea,
That, while the happy lovers gaze
On her, the hope of happier days
Steals unawares, like Heaven's own breath
O'er souls that were prepared for death.
They gaze on her, till she appears
As if she understood their tears;
To lay there with her cheerful sail
Till Heaven should send some gracious gale,

Some gentle spirit of the deep,
With motion soft and swift as sleep,
To waft them to some pleasant cave
In the unknown gardens of the wave,
That, hid from every human eye,
Are happy in the smiling sky,
And in their beauty win the love
Of every orb that shines above.
Fitz-Owen from his dream awakes,
And gently in his arms he takes
His gentle Maid, as a shepherd kind
Brings from the killing mountain wind
A snow-white lamb, and lets it rest
In sleep and beauty on his breast.
And now the gentle fearless Maid
Within the boat in peace is laid:
Her limbs recline as if in sleep,
Though almost resting on the deep;
On his dear bosom leans her head,
And through her long hair, wildly spread
O'er all her face, her melting eyes
Are lifted upwards to the skies,
In silent prayer that Heaven would save
The arms that fold her from the grave.

The boat hath left the lonesome rock,
And tries the wave again,
And on she glides without a fear,
So beauteous is the main.
Her little sail beneath the sun
Gleams radiant as the snow,
And o'er the gently-heaving swell
Bounds like a mountain-roe.
In that frail bark the lovers sit,
With steadfast face and silent breath,
Following the guiding hope of life,
Yet reconciled to death.
His arm is round her tender side,
That moves beneath the press,
With a mingled beat of solemn awe
And virgin tenderness.
They speak not:—but the inward flow
Of faith and dread, and joy and woe,
Each from the other hears:
Long, long they gaze with meeting eyes,

Then lift them slowly to the skies
Steeped in imploring tears.
And ever, as the rock recedes,
They feel their spirits rise;
And half forget that the smiling sea
Caused all their miseries.
Yet safe to them is the trackless brine
As some well-known and rural road
Paced in their childhood;—for they love
Each other, and believe in God.

And well might the refulgent day
These Ocean Pilgrims cheer,
And make them feel as if the glades
Of home itself were near.
For a living sentiment of joy,
Such as doth sleep on hill and vale
When the friendly sun comes from his clouds
The vernal bloom to hail,
Plays on the Ocean's sparkling breast,
That, half in motion, half at rest,
Like a happy thing doth lie;
Breathing that fresh and fragrant air,
And seeming in that slumber fair
The Brother of the Sky.
Hues brighter than the ruby-stone
With radiance gem his wavy zone,
A million hues, I ween:
Long dazzling lines of snowy white,
Fantastic wreathed with purple light,
Or bathed in richest green.
The flying fish, on wings of gold,
Skims through the sunny ray,
Then, like the rainbow's dying gleam,
In the clear wave melts away.
And all the beauteous joy seems made
For that dauntless Youth and sainted Maid,
Whom God and Angels love:
Comfort is in the helm, the sail,
The light, the clouds, the sea, the gale,
Around, below, above.

And thus they sail, and sail along,
Without one thought of fear;

As calm as if the boatman's song
Awoke an echoing cheer
O'er the hills that stretch in sylvan pride
On the Bala Lake's romantic side.
And lo! beneath the mellowing light,
That trembles between day and night
Before the Sun's decline,
As to the touch of fairy-hand
Upstarting dim the nameless land
Extends its mountain line.
It is no cloud that steadfast lies
Between the Ocean and the Skies;
No image of a cloud, that flings
Across the deep its shadowy wings;
Such as oft cheats with visions fair
The heart of home-sick mariner.
It is the living Earth! They see
From the shore a smile of amity
That gently draws them on,
Such a smile as o'er all Nature glows
At a summer evening's fragrant close,
When the winds and rain are gone.
The self-moved boat appears to seek
With gladsome glide a home-like creek,
In the centre of a bay,
Which the calm and quiet hills surround,
And touched by waves without a sound,
Almost as calm as they.

And, what if here fierce savage men
Glare on them from some darksome den?—
What would become of this most helpless Maid?
Fitz-Owen thinks:—but in her eye
So calmly bright, he can descry
That she is not afraid
Of savage men or monsters wild,
But is sublimely reconciled
To meet and bear her destiny.
A gentle rippling on the sand—
One stroke of the dexterous oar—
The sail is furled: the boat is moored:
And the Lovers walk the shore.
To them it is an awful thought,
From the wild world of waters brought
By God's protecting hand,

When every Christian soul was lost,
On that unknown, but beauteous coast,
As in a dream to stand.
While their spirits with devotion burn,
Their faces to the sea they turn,
That lately seemed their grave;
And bless, in murmurs soft and low,
The beautiful, the halcyon glow,
That bathes the evening wave.
Before the setting sun they kneel,
And through the silent air,
To Him that dwells on that throne of light
They pour their souls in prayer.
Their thoughts are floating, like the clouds
That seek the beauteous West,
Their gentleness, their peace the same,
The same their home of rest.
Now Night hath come with the cooling breeze,
And these Lovers still are on their knees.

CANTO THIRD.

Oh many are the beauteous isles
Unknown to human eye,
That, sleeping 'mid the Ocean smiles,
In happy silence lie.
The Ship may pass them in the night,
Nor the sailors know what a lovely sight
Is resting on the Main;
Some wandering Ship who hath lost her way,
And never, or by night or day,
Shall pass these isles again.
There, groves that bloom in endless spring
Are rustling to the radiant wing
Of birds, in various plumage bright,
As rainbow hues, or dawning light.
Soft-falling showers of blossoms fair,
Float ever on the fragrant air,
Like showers of vernal snow,

And from the fruit-tree, spreading tall,
The richly ripened clusters fall
Oft as sea-breezes blow.
The sun and clouds alone possess
The joy of all that loveliness;
And sweetly to each other smile
The live-long day—sun, cloud, and isle.
How silent lies each sheltered bay!
No other visitors have they
To their shores of silvery sand,
Than the waves that, murmuring in their glee,
All hurrying in a joyful band
Come dancing from the sea.

How did I love to sigh and weep
For those that sailed upon the deep,
When, yet a wondering child,
I sat alone at dead of night,
Hanging all breathless with delight
O'er their adventures wild!
Trembling I heard of dizzy shrouds,
Where up among the raving clouds
The sailor-boy must go;
Thunder and lightning o'er his head!
And, should he fall—O thought of dread!
Waves mountain-high below.
How leapt my heart with wildering fears,
Gazing on savage islanders
Ranged fierce in long canoe,
Their poisoned spears, their war-attire,
And plumes twined bright, like wreaths of fire,
Round brows of dusky hue!
What tears would fill my wakeful eyes
When some delicious paradise
(As if a cloud had rolled
On a sudden from the bursting sun),
Freshening the Ocean where it shone,
Flung wide its groves of gold!
No more the pining Mariner
In wild delirium raves,
For like an angel, kind and fair,
That smiles, and smiling saves,
The glory charms away distress,
Serene in silent loveliness
Amid the dash of waves.

And wouldst thou think it hard to dwell
Alone within some sylvan cell,
Some fragrant arch of flowers,
Raised like a queen with gracious smile
In the midst of this her subject isle,
This labyrinth of bowers?
Could the fair earth, and fairer skies,
Clouds, breezes, fountains, groves,
To banish from thy heart suffice
All thought of deeper loves?
Or wouldst thou pine thy life away,
To kiss once more the blessèd ray
That shines in human eyes?
What though the clustering roses came
Like restless gleams of magic flame,
As if they loved thy feet,
To win thee like a summer sprite,
With purest touches of delight,
To the Fairy Queen's retreat!
Oh! they would bloom and wither too,
And melt their pearls of radiant dew,
Without one look from thee:
What pleasure could that beauty give,
Which, of all mortal things that live,
None but thyself may see?
And where are the birds that cheered thine eyes,
With wings and crests of rainbow dyes,
That wont for aye to glide
Like sunbeams through the shady bowers,
Charming away the happy hours
With songs of love or pride?
Soon, soon thou hatest this Paradise;
It seems the soul hath fled
That made it fairer than the skies,
And a joyful beauty shed
O'er the tremor of the circling wave,
That now with restless moans and sighs
Sounds like the dirge-song of the dead,
Dim breaking round a grave.

But she thou lovest is at thy side,
The Island Queen becomes thy bride,
And God and Nature sanctify the vow;
Air, Earth, and Ocean smile once more,

And along the forest-fringèd shore,
What mirth and music now!
What warm and heavenly tints illume
The land that lately seemed a tomb
Where thou wert left to die!
So bathed in joy this earth appears
To him, who, blind for lingering years,
At last beholds the sky.
Thy heart was like an untouched lyre,
Silent as death—Let the trembling wire
The hand that knows its spirit feel;
And list! What melting murmurs steal
Like incense to the realms above,
Such sounds as parted souls might love.
And now if a home-bound vessel lay
At anchor in yon beauteous bay,
'Till the land-breeze her canvass wings should swell,
From the sweet Isle thou scarce wouldst part,
But, when thou didst, thy lingering heart
Would sadly say, "Farewell!"

In such a fairy Isle now prayed
Fitz-Owen and his darling Maid.
The setting sun, with a pensive glow,
Had bathed their foreheads bending low,
Nor ceased the voice, or the breath of their prayer,
Till the moonlight lay on the mellowed air.
Then from the leaves they calmly rose,
As after a night of calm repose,
And Mary leaned her face
With a sob of joy on her Lover's breast,
Who with kind tones the Maiden prest
In a holy pure embrace.
And gently he kissed her tearful eyes,
And bade her heart lie still,
For there was a power in the gracious skies,
To shield their saints from ill.
Then, guided by the moonlight pale,
They walked into a sylvan vale,
Soft, silent, warm, and deep;
And there beneath her languid head,
The silken withered leaves he spread,
That she might sweetly sleep.
Then down he sat by her tender side,
And, as she lay, with soft touch dried

The stealing tears she could not hide ;
Till sleep, like a faint shadow, fell
O'er the husht face he loved so well,
And smiling dreams were given
To cheer her heart ; then down he laid
His limbs beside the sleeping Maid,
In the face of the starry Heaven.

Sleep fell upon their wearied souls
With a power as deep as death ;
Scarce trembled Mary's floating hair
In her Lover's tranquil breath.
In that still trance did dear thoughts come
From the brook, and the glade, and the sky, of home,
And the gentle sound of her mother's voice
Bade Mary's slumbering soul rejoice.
For she in dreams to Wales hath flown,
And sits in a cottage of her own,
Beneath its sheltering tree :
Fitz-Owen's eye is fixed on hers,
While with a timid smile she stirs
Beside her mother's knee.
But the rising sun hath pour'd his beams
Into her heart, and broke her dreams ;
Slowly she lifts her eyes,
And, wondering at the change, looks round
Upon that wild enchanted ground,
And these delightful skies.
Over her Lover's breast she breathes
A blessing and a prayer,
And gently they stir his sleeping soul,
Like the voice of the morning-air.
Soon as the first surprise is past,
They rise from their leafy bed,
As cheerful as the new-woke birds
That sing above their head.
And trusting in the merciful Power
That saved them in that dismal hour
When the ship sank in the sea,
Cheering their souls with many a smile,
They walk through the woods of this nameless Isle
In undisturbed tranquillity.

Well might they deem that wizard's wand
Had set them down in Fairyland,

Or that their souls some beauteous dream obeyed :
They know not where to look or listen,
For pools and streams of crystal glisten
Above, around,—embracing like the air
The soft-reflected trees ; while everywhere
From shady nook, clear hill, and sunny glade,
The ever-varying soul of music played ;
As if, at some capricious thing's command,
Indulging every momentary mood,
With voice and instrument, a fairy band
Beneath some echoing precipice now stood,
Now on steep mountain's rocky battlement,
Or from the clouds their blended chorus sent,
With jocund din to mock the solitude.
They gaze with never-sated eyes
On lengthening lines of flowery dyes,
That through the woods, and up the mountains run :
Not richer radiance robes the Even,
When she ascends her throne in Heaven,
Beside the setting sun.
Scattering the blossomy gems away,
Like the white shower of the Ocean spray,
Across their path for ever glide or shoot
Birds of such beauty, as might lead
The soul to think that magic power decreed
Spirits to dwell therein ; nor are they mute,
But each doth chant his own belovèd strain,
For ever trembling on a natural tune,
The heart's emotions seeming so to suit,
That the rapt Lovers are desiring soon,
That silence never may return again.

A cheerful welcome these bright creatures sing;
And as the Lovers roam from glade to glade,
That shine with sunlight, and with music ring,
Seems but for them the enchanted island made.
So strong the influence of the fairy scene,
That soon they feel as if for many a year
In love and rapture they had lingered here,
While with the beauteous things that once have been
Long, long ago, or only in the mind
By Fancy imaged, lies their native Wales,
Its dim-seen hills, and all its streamy vales :
Sounds in their souls its rushing mountain-wind,

Like music heard in youth, remembered well,
But when or where it rose they cannot tell.
Delightful woods, and many a cloudless sky,
Are in their memory strangely floating by,
But the faint pageant slowly melts away,
And to the living earth they yield
Their willing hearts, as if revealed
In all its glory on this mystic day.
Like fire, strange flowers around them flame,
Sweet, harmless fire, breathed from some magic urn,
The silky gossamer that may not burn,
Too wildly beautiful to bear a name.
And when the Ocean sends a breeze,
To wake the music sleeping in the trees,
Trees scarce they seem to be; for many a flower,
Radiant as dew, or ruby polished bright,
Glances on every spray, that bending light
Around the stem, in variegated bows,
Appear like some awakened fountain-shower,
That with the colour of the evening glows.

And towering o'er these beauteous woods,
Gigantic rocks were ever dimly seen,
Breaking with solemn grey the tremulous green,
And frowning far in castellated pride;
While, hastening to the Ocean, hoary floods
Sent up a thin and radiant mist between,
Softening the beauty that it could not hide.
Lo! higher still the stately Palm-trees rise,
Chequering the clouds with their unbending stems,
And o'er the clouds amid the dark-blue skies
Lifting their rich unfading diadems.
How calm and placidly they rest
Upon the Heavens' indulgent breast,
As if their branches never breeze had known!
Light bathes them aye in glancing showers,
And Silence mid their lofty bowers
Sits on her moveless throne.
Entranced there the Lovers gaze,
Till every human fear decays,
And bliss steals slowly through their quiet souls;
Though ever lost to humankind
And all they love, they are resigned:
While with a scarce-heard murmur rolls,

Like the waves that break along the shore,
The sound of the world they must see no more.
List! Mary is the first to speak,
Her tender voice still tenderer in her bliss;
And breathing o'er her silent husband's cheek,
As from an infant's lip, a timid kiss,
Whose touch at once all lingering sorrow calms,
Says, "God to us in love hath given
A home on earth, most like to Heaven,
Our own sweet ISLE OF PALMS."

And where shall these happy lovers dwell?
Shall they seek in the cliffs for some mossy cell?
Some wilder haunt than ever hermit knew?
Where they may shun the mid-day heat,
And slumber in a safe retreat,
When evening sheds her dew;
Or shall they build a leafy nest,
Where they like birds may sport and rest,
By clustering bloom preserved from sun and rain,
Upon some little radiant mound
Within reach of the freshening sound
That murmurs from the Main?
No farther need their footsteps roam:
Even where they stand, a sylvan home
Steals like a thought upon their startled sight;
For Nature's breath with playful power
Hath framed an undecaying bower,
With colours heavenly bright.
Beyond a green and level lawn,
Its porch and roof of roses dawn
Through arching trees that lend a mellowing shade.
How gleams the bower with countless dyes!
Unwearied spring fresh bloom supplies,
Still brightening where they fade.
Two noble Palms, the forest's pride,
Guarding the bower on either side,
Their straight majestic stems to heaven uprear:
There Beauty sleeps in Grandeur's arms,
And sheltered there from all alarms,
Hath nought on earth to fear.

The Dwellers in that lovely bower,
If mortal shape may breathe such blessèd air,

Might gaze on it from morn till evening-hour,
Nor wish for other sight more touching fair.
Why look abroad? All things are here
Delightful to the eye and ear,
And fragrance pure as light floats all around.
But if they look—those mystic gleams,
The glory we adore in dreams,
May here in truth be found.
Fronting the bower, eternal woods,
Darkening the mountain solitudes,
With awe the soul oppress:
There dwells, with shadowy glories crowned,
Rejoicing in the gloom profound,
The Spirit of the Wilderness.
Lo! stretching inward on the right,
A winding vale eludes the sight,
But where it dies the happy soul must dream:
Oh! never sure beneath the sun,
Along such lovely banks did run
So musical a stream.
But who shall dare in thought to paint
Yon fairy waterfall?
Still moistened by the misty showers,
From fiery red, to yellow soft and faint,
Fantastic bands of fearless flowers
Sport o'er the rocky wall;
And ever, through the shrouding spray,
Whose diamonds glance as bright as they,
Float birds of graceful form, and gorgeous plumes,
Or dazzling white as snow;
While, as the passing sun illumes
The river's bed, in silent pride
Spanning the cataract roaring wide,
Unnumbered rainbows glow.

But turn around, if thou hast power
To leave a scene so fair,
And looking leftwards from the bower,
What glory meets thee there!
For lo! the heaven-encircled Sea
Outspreads his dazzling pageantry,
As if the whole creation were his own,
And the Isle, on which thy feet now stand,
In beauty rose at his command,
And for his joy alone.

Beyond his billows rolling bright,
The Spirit dares not wing her flight;
For where, upon the boundless deep,
Should she, if wearied, sink to sleep?
Back to the beauteous Isle of Palms
Glad she returns; there constant calms
The bays, that sleep like inland lakes, invest:
Delightful all;—but to your eyes,
O blessèd Pair! one circlet lies
More fair than all the rest.
At evening, through that silent bay
With beating hearts ye steered your way,
Yet trusting in the guiding love of Heaven;
And there, upon your bended knees,
To the unseen Pilot of the Seas
Your speechless prayers were given.
From your bower-porch the skiff behold
That to this Eden bore
Your almost hopeless souls: how bold
It seems to lie, all danger o'er,
A speck amid the fluid gold
That burns along the shore!

Five cloudless days have, from the placid deep,
In glory risen o'er this refulgent Isle,
And still the Sun retired to rest too soon;
And each night with more gracious smile,
Guarding the lovers when they sleep,
Hath watched the holy Moon.
Through many a dim and dazzling glade,
They in their restless joy have strayed,
In many a grot reposed, and twilight cave;
Have wandered round each ocean bay,
And gazed where inland waters lay
Serene as night, and bright as day,
Untouched by wind or wave.
Happy their doom, though strange and wild,
And soon their souls are reconciled
For ever here to live, and here to die.
Why should they grieve? a constant mirth
With music fills the air and earth,
And beautifies the sky.
High on the rocks the wild-flowers shine
In beauty bathed, and joy divine:

In their dark nooks to them are given
The sunshine and the dews of Heaven.
The fish that dart like silver-gleams
Are happy in their rock-bound streams,
Happy as they that roam the Ocean's breast
Though far away on sounding wings
Yon bird could fly, content he sings
Around his secret nest.
And shall the Monarchs of this Isle
Lament, when one unclouded smile
Hangs like perpetual spring on every wood?
And often in their listening souls
By a delightful awe subdued,
God's voice, like mellow thunder, rolls
All through the silent solitude.

Five days have fled!—The Sun again,
Like an angel, o'er the brightening Main
Uplifts his radiant head;
And full upon yon dewy bower,
The warm tints of the dawning hour
Mid warmer still are shed.
The Sun pours not his light in vain
On them who therein dwell: a strain
Of pious music, through the morning calm
Wakening unwonted echoes, wildly rings,
And kneeling there to Mercy's fane,
While flowers supply their incense-balm,
At the foot of yon majestic Palm
The Maid her matin sings.
It is the Sabbath morn: since last
From Heaven it shone, what awful things have past
In their beloved vessel as it rolled
In pride and beauty o'er the waves of gold,
Then were they sailing free from all alarms,
Rejoicing in her scarce-felt motion
When the ship flew, or slumbering Ocean
Detained her in his arms.
Beneath the sail's expanded shade,
They and the thoughtless crew together prayed,
And sweet their voices rose above the wave;
Nor seemed it woeful as a strain
That never was to rise again,
And chanted o'er the grave.

Ne'er seemed before the Isle so bright;
And when their hymns were ended,
Oh! ne'er in such intense delight
Had their rapt souls been blended.
Some natural tears they surely owed
To those who wept for them, and fast they flowed,
And oft will flow amid their happiest hours;
But not less fair the summer day,
Though glittering through the sunny ray
Are seen descending showers.
But how could Sorrow, Grief, or Pain,
The glory of that morn sustain?
Alone amid the Wilderness
More touching seemed the holiness
Of that mysterious day of soul-felt rest:
They are the first that e'er adored
On this wild spot their Heavenly Lord,
Or gentle Jesus blessed.
"O Son of God!"—How sweetly came
Into their souls that blessèd name!
Even like health's hope-reviving breath
To one upon the bed of death.
"Our Saviour!"—What angelic grace
Stole with dim smiles o'er Mary's face,
While through the solitude profound
With love and awe she breathed that holy sound!
Yes! He will save! a still small voice
To Mary's fervent prayer replied;
Beneath His tender care rejoice,
On earth who for His children died.
Her Lover saw that, while she prayed,
Communion with her God was given
Unto her sinless spirit: nought he said;
But gazing on her with a fearful love,
Such as saints feel for sister-souls above,
Her cheek upon his bosom gently laid,
And dreamt with her of Heaven.

Pure were their souls, as infant's breath,
Who in its cradle guiltless sinks in death.
No place for human frailty this,
Despondency or fears;
Too beautiful the wild appears
Almost for human bliss.

Was love like theirs then given in vain?
And must they, trembling, shrink from pure delight?
Or shall that God, who on the main
Hath bound them with a billowy chain,
Approve the holy rite,
That, by their pious souls alone
Performed before His silent throne
In innocence and joy,
Here, and in realms beyond the grave,
Unites those whom the cruel wave
Could not for grief destroy?
No fears felt they of guilt or sin,
For sure they heard a voice within
That set their hearts at rest;
They passed the day in peaceful prayer,
And when beneath the evening air,
They sought again their arbour fair,
A smiling angel met them there,
And bade their couch be blest.
Nor veiled the Moon her virgin-light,
But, clear and cloudless all the night,
Hung o'er the flowers where love and beauty lay;
And, loth to leave that holy bower,
With lingering pace obeyed the power
Of bright-returning day.

And say! what wanteth now the Isle of Palms,
To make it happy as those Isles of rest
(When eve the sky becalms
Like a subsiding sea),
That hang resplendent mid the gorgeous west,
All brightly imaged, mountain, grove, and tree,
The setting sun's last lingering pageantry!
Hath Fancy ever dreamt of seraph-Powers
Walking in beauty through these cloud-framed bowers,
Light as the mist that wraps their dazzling feet?
And hath she ever paused to hear,
By moonlight brought unto her ear,
Their hymnings wild and sweet?
Lo! human creatures meet her view
As happy, and as beauteous too,
As those aërial phantoms!—in their mien,
Where'er they move, a graceful calm is seen
All foreign to this utter solitude,

Yet blended with such wild and fairy glide,
As erst in Grecian Isle had beautified
The guardian Deities of Grove and Flood.
Are these fair creatures earth-born and alive,
And mortal, like the flowers that round them smile?
Or if into the Ocean sank their Isle
A thousand fathoms deep—would they survive,—
Like sudden rainbows spread their arching wings,
And while, to cheer their airy voyage, sings
With joy the charmèd sea, the Heavens give way,
That in the spirits, who had sojourned long
On earth, might glide, then re-assume their sway,
And from the gratulating throng
Of kindred spirits, drink the inexpressive song?

Oh! fairer now these blessèd Lovers seem,
Gliding like spirits through o'er-arching trees,
Their beauty mellowing in the chequered light,
Than, years ago, on that resplendent night,
When yielded up to an unearthly dream,
In their sweet ship they sailed upon the seas.
Ay! years ago!—for in this temperate clime,
Fleet, passing fleet, the noiseless plumes of time
Float through the fragrance of the sunny air;
One little month seems scarcely gone,
Since in a vessel of their own
At eve they landed there.
Their bower is now a stately bower,
For, on its roof, the loftiest flower
To bloom so lowly grieves,
And up like an ambitious thing
That feareth nought, behold it spring
Till it meet the high Palm-leaves!
The porch is opening seen no more,
But folded up with blossoms hoar,
And leaves green as the sea,
And, when the wind hath found them out,
The merry waves that dancing rout
May not surpass in glee.
About their home so little art,
They seem to live in Nature's heart,
A sylvan court to hold
In a palace framed of lustre green,
More rare than to the bright Flower Queen
Was ever built of old.

Where are they in the hours of day?
—The birds are happy on the spray,
The dolphins on the deep,
Whether they wanton full of life,
Or, wearied with their playful strife,
Amid the sunshine sleep.
And are these things by Nature blest
In sport, in labour, and in rest,—
And yet the Sovereigns of the Isle opprest
With langnor or with pain?
No! with light glide, and cheerful song,
Through flowers and fruit they dance along,
And still fresh joys, uncalled for, throng
Through their romantic reign.
The wild-deer bounds along the rock,
But let him not you hunter mock,
Though strong, and fierce, and fleet;
For he will trace his mountain-path,
Or else his antler's threatening wrath
In some dark winding meet.
Vaunt not, gay bird! thy gorgeous plume
Though on you leafy tree it bloom
Like a flower both rich and fair:
Vain thy loud song and scarlet glow,
To save from his unerring bow;
The arrow finds thee there.
Dark are the caverns of the wave,
Yet those, that sport there, cannot save,
Though hidden from the day,
With silvery sides bedropt with gold,
Struggling they on the beach are rolled
O'er shells as bright as they.

Their pastimes these, and labours too,
From day to day unwearied they renew,
In garments floating with a woodland grace:
Oh! lovelier far than fabled sprites,
They glide along through new delights,
Like Health and Beauty vying in the race.
Yet hours of soberer bliss they know,
Their spirits in more solemn flow
At day-fall oft will run
When from his throne, with kingly motion,
Into the loving arms of Ocean
Descends the setting sun.

"Oh! beauteous are thy rocky vales,
Land of my birth, forsaken Wales!
Towering from continent or sea,
Where is the Mountain like to thee?—
The eagle's darling, and the tempest's pride,—
Thou! on whose ever-varying side
The shadows and the sun-beams glide
In still or stormy weather,
Oh Snowdon! may I breathe thy name?
And thine too, of gigantic frame,
Cader-Idris? 'neath the solar flame,
Oh! proud ye stand together
And thou, sweet Lake!"—but from its wave
She turned her inward eye,
For near these banks, within her grave,
Her mother sure must lie:
Weak were her limbs, long, long ago,
And grief, ere this, hath laid them low.

Yet soon Fitz-Owen's eye and voice
From these sad dreams recall
His weeping wife; and deeply cheered
She soon forgets them all.
Or, haply, through delighted tears,
Her mother's smiling shade appears,
And, her most duteous child caressing,
Bestows on her a parent's blessing,
And tells that o'er these holy groves
Oft hangs the parent whom she loves.
How beauteous both in hours like these!
Prest in each other's arms, or on their knees,
They think of things for which no words are found;
They need not speak: their looks express
More life-pervading tenderness
Than music's sweetest sound.
He thinks upon the dove-like rest
That broods within her pious breast;
The holy calm, the hush divine,
Where pensive, night-like glories shine;
Even as the mighty Ocean deep,
Yet clear and waveless as the sleep
Of some lone heaven-reflecting lake,
When evening-airs its gleam forsake.
She thinks upon his love for her,
His wild, impassioned character,

To whom a look, a kiss, a smile,
Rewards for danger and for toil!
His power of spirit unsubdued,
His fearlessness,—his fortitude,—
The radiance of his gifted soul,
Where never mists or darkness roll:
A poet's soul that flows for ever,
Right onwards like a noble river,
Refulgent still, or by its native woods
Shaded, and rolling on through sunless solitudes.

In love and mercy, sure on him had God
The sacred power that stirs the soul bestowed;
Nor fell his hymns on Mary's ear in vain;
With brightening smiles the Vision hung
O'er the rapt poet while he sung,
More beauteous from the strain.
The songs he poured were sad and wild,
And while they would have soothed a child,
Who soon bestows his tears,
A deeper pathos in them lay
Than would have moved a hermit grey,
Bowed down with holy years.
One song he had about a Ship
That perished on the Main,
So woeful, that his Mary prayed,
At one most touching pause he made,
To cease the hearse-like strain:
And yet, in spite of all her pain,
Implored him, soon as he obeyed,
To sing it once again.
With faltering voice then would he sing
Of many a well-known far-off thing,
Towers, castles, lakes, and rills;
Their names he gave not—could not give—
But happy ye, he thought, who live
Among the Cambrian hills.
Then of their own sweet Isle of Palms,
Full many a lovely lay
He sang; and of two happy sprites
Who live and revel in delights
For ever, night and day.
And who, even of immortal birth,
Or that for Heaven have left this earth,
Were e'er more blest than they!

But shall that bliss endure for ever?
And shall these consecrated groves
Behold and cherish their immortal loves?
Or must it come, the hour that is to sever
Those whom the Ocean in his wrath did spare?
Awful that thought, and, like unto despair,
Oft to their hearts it sends an icy chill;
Pain, death they fear not, come they when they will,
But the same fate together let them share;
For how could either hope to die resigned,
If God should say, "One must remain behind"?
Yet wisely doth the spirit shrink
From thought, when it is death to think:
Or haply, a kind being turns
To brighter hopes the soul that mourns
In killing woe; else many an eye,
Now glad, would weep its destiny.
Even so it fares with them: they wish to live
Long on this island, lonely though it be.
Old age itself to them would pleasure give,
For lo! a sight, which it is heaven to see,
Down yonder hill comes glancing beauteously,
And with a silver voice most wildly sweet,
Flings herself, laughing, down before her parents' feet.

Are they in truth her parents?—Was her birth
Not drawn from heavenly sire, and from the breast
Of some fair spirit, whose sinless nature glowed
With purest flames, enamoured of a god,
And gave this child to light in realms of rest;
Then sent her to adorn these island bowers,
To sport and play with the delighted hours,
Till called again to dwell among the blest?
Sweet are such fancies:—but that kindling smile
Dissolves them all!—Her native isle
This sure must be: If she in Heaven were born,
What breathed into her face
That winning human grace,
Now dim, now dazzling like the break of morn?
For, like the timid light of infant day,
That oft, when dawning, seems to die away,
The gleam of rapture from her visage flies,
Then fades, as if afraid, into her tender eyes.
Open thy lips, thou blessèd thing, again!
And let thy parents live upon the sound;

No other music wish they till they die.
For never yet disease, or grief, or pain,
Within thy breast the living lyre hath found,
Whose chords send forth that touching melody.
Sing on! sing on! it is a lovely air.
Well could thy mother sing it when a maid:
Yet strange it is in this wild Indian glade,
To list a tune that breathes of nothing there,
A tune that by his mountain-springs,
Beside his slumbering lambkins fair,
The Cambrian shepherd sings.

The air on her sweet lips hath died,
And as a harper, when his tune is played,
Pathetic though it be, with smiling brow
Haply doth careless fling his harp aside,
Even so regardlessly upstarteth now,
With playful frolic, the light-hearted maid,
As if, with a capricious gladness,
She strove to mock the soul of sadness,
Then mourning through the glade.
Light as a falling leaf that springs
Away before the zephyr's wings,
Amid the verdure seems to lie
Of motion reft, then suddenly,
With bird-like fluttering, mounts on high,
Up yon steep hill's unbroken side,
Behold the little Fairy glide.
Though free her breath, untired her limb,
For through the air she seems to swim,
Yet oft she stops to look behind
On them below;—till with the wind
She flies again, and on the hill-top far
Shines like the spirit of the evening star.
Nor lingers long: as if a sight
Half-fear, half-wonder, urged her flight,
In rapid motion, winding still
To break the steepness of the hill,
With leaps, and springs, and out-stretched arms,
More graceful in her vain alarms,
The child outstrips the Ocean gale,
In haste to tell her wondrous tale.
Her parents' joyful hearts admire,
Of peacock's plumes her glancing tire,
All bright with tiny suns,

And the gleamings of the feathery gold,
That play along each wavy fold
Of her mantle as she runs.

"What ails my child?" her mother cries,
Seeing the wildness in her eyes,
The wonder on her cheek;
But fearfully she beckons still,
Up to her watch-tower on the hill,
Ere one word can she speak.
"My Father! Mother! quickly fly
Up to the green hill top with me,
And tell me what you there descry;
For a cloud hath fallen from the sky,
And is sailing on the sea."
They wait not to hear that word again:
The steep seems level as the plain,
And up they glide with ease:
They stand one moment on the height
In agony, then bless the sight,
And drop upon their knees.
"A Ship!"—no more can Mary say,
"A blessèd Ship!" and faints away.—
Not so the happy sight subdues
Fitz-Owen's heart;—he calmly views
The gallant vessel toss
Her prow superbly up and down,
As if she wore the ocean crown;
And now, exulting in the breeze,
With new-woke English pride he sees
St George's blessed Cross.

Behold them now, the happy three,
Hang up a signal o'er the sea,
And shout with echoing sound,
While, gladdened by her parents' bliss,
The child prints many a playful kiss
Upon their hands, or, mad with glee,
Is dancing round and round.
Scarce doth the thoughtless infant know
Why thus their tears like rain should flow,
Yet she must also weep;
Such tears as innocence doth shed
Upon its undisturbèd bed,
When dreaming in its sleep.

And oft, and oft, her father presses
Her breast to his, and bathes her tresses,
Her sweet eyes and fair brow.
"How beautiful upon the wave
The vessel sails, who comes to save!
Fitting it was that first she shone
Before the wondering eyes of one,
So beautiful as thou.
See how before the wind she goes,
Scattering the waves like melting snows!
Her course with glory fills
The sea for many a league!—Descending,
She stoopeth now into the vale,
Now, as more freshly blows the gale,
She mounts in triumph o'er the watery hills.
Oh! whither is she tending?
She holds in sight yon sheltered bay;
As for her crew, how blest are they!
See! how she veers around!
Back whirl the waves with louder sound;
And now her prow points to the land:
For the Ship, at her glad lord's command,
Doth well her helm obey."

They cast their eyes around the isle:
But what a change is there!
For ever fled that lonely smile
That lay on earth and air,
That made its haunts so still and holy,
Almost for bliss too melancholy,
For life too wildly fair.
Gone—gone is all its loneliness,
And with it much of loveliness.
Into each deep glen's dark recess,
The day-shine pours like rain,
So strong and sudden is the light
Reflected from that wonder bright,
Now tilting o'er the Main.
Soon as the thundering cannon spoke,
The voice of the evening-gun
The spell of the enchantment broke,
Like dew beneath the sun.
Soon shall they hear the unwonted cheers
Of these delighted mariners,
And the loud sound of the oar,

As bending back away they pull,
With measured pause, most beautiful,
Approaching to the shore.
For her yards are bare of man and sail,
Nor moves the giant to the gale;
But, on the Ocean's breast,
With storm-proof cables, stretching far,
There lies the stately Ship of War;
And glad is she of rest.

Ungrateful ye! and will ye sail away,
And leave your bower to flourish and decay,
Without one parting tear?
Where you have slept, and loved, and prayed,
And with your smiling infant played
For many a blessed year!
No! not in vain that bower hath shed
Its blossoms o'er your marriage-bed,
Nor the sweet Moon looked down in vain,
Forgetful of her heavenly reign,
On them whose pure and holy bliss
Even beautified that wilderness.
To every rock, and glade, and dell,
You now breathe forth a sad farewell.
"Say! wilt thou ever murmur on
With that same voice when we are gone.
Belovèd stream!—Ye birds of light!
And in your joy as musical as bright,
Still will you pour that thrilling strain,
Unheard by us who sail the distant main?
We leave our nuptial bower to you!
There still your harmless loves renew,
And there, as they who left it, blest,
The loveliest ever build your nest.
Farewell once more—for now and ever!
Yet, though unhoped-for mercy sever
Our lives from thee, where grief might come at last;
Yet whether chained in tropic calms,
Or driven before the blast,
Most surely shall our spirits never
Forget the Isle of Palms."—

"What means the Ship?" Fitz-Owen cries,
And scarce can trust his startled eyes,

"While safely she at anchor swings,
Why doth she thus expand her wings?
She will not surely leave the bay,
Where sweetly smiles the closing day,
As if it tempted her to stay?
O cruel Ship! 'tis even so:
No sooner come than in haste to go;
Angel of bliss! and fiend of woe!"—
—"Oh! let that God who brought her here,
My husband's wounded spirit cheer!
Mayhap the ship for months and years
Hath been among the storms, and fears
Yon lowering cloud, that on the wave
Flings down the shadow of a grave;
For well thou know'st the bold can be
By shadows daunted, when they sail the sea.
Think, in our own lost ship, when o'er our head
Walked the sweet Moon in unobscurèd light,
How oft the sailors gazed with causeless dread
On her, the glory of the innocent night,
As if in those still hours of heavenly joy,
They saw a spirit smiling to destroy.
Trust that, when morning brings her light,
The sun will show a glorious sight,
This very Ship in joy returning
With outspread sails and ensigns burning,
To quench in bliss our causeless mourning."—
—"O Father! look with kinder eyes
On me,"—the Fairy-infant cries.
"Though oft thy face hath looked most sad,
At times when I was gay and glad,
These are not like thy other sighs.
But that I saw my Father grieve,
Most happy when you thing did leave
Our shores, was I:—Mid waves and wind,
Where, Father! could we ever find
So sweet an island as our own?
And so we all would think, I well believe,
Lamenting, when we look'd behind,
That the Isle of Palms was gone."—

Oh blessed child! each artless tone
Of that sweet voice, thus plaintively
Breathing of comfort to thyself unknown,
Who feelest not how beautiful thou art,

Sinks like an anthem's pious melody
Into thy father's agitated heart,
And makes it calm and tranquil as thy own.
A shower of kisses bathes thy smiling face,
And thou, rejoicing once again to hear
The voice of love so pleasant to thine ear,
Thorough the brake, and o'er the lawn,
Bounding along like a sportive fawn,
With laugh and song renew'st thy devious race ;
Or round them like a guardian sprite,
Dancing with more than mortal grace,
Steepest their gazing souls in still delight.
For how could they, thy parents, see
Thy innocent and fearless glee,
And not forget, but one short hour ago,
When the Ship sailed away, how bitter was their woe ?
—Most like a dream it doth appear,
When she, the vanished Ship, was here :—
A glimpse of joy, that, while it shone,
Was surely passing-sweet :—now it is gone,
Not worth one single tear.

CANTO FOURTH.

A SUMMER Night descends in balm
On the orange-bloom, and the stately Palm,
Of that romantic steep,
Where, silent as the silent hour,
'Mid the soft leaves of their Indian bower,
Three happy spirits sleep.
And we will leave them to themselves,
To the moon and the stars, these happy elves,
To the murmuring wave, and the zephyr's wing,
That dreams of gentlest joyance bring
To bathe their slumbering eyes ;
And on the moving clouds of night,
High o'er the main will take our flight,
Where beauteous Albion lies.
Wondrous, and strange, and fair, I ween,
The sounds, the forms, the hues have been
Of these delightful groves ;

And mournful as the melting sky,
Or a faint-remembered melody,
The story of their loves.
Yet though they sleep, those breathings wild,
That told of the Fay-like sylvan child,
And of them who live in lonely bliss,
Like bright flowers of the wilderness,
Happy and beauteous as the sky
That views them with a loving eye,
Another tale I have to sing,
Whose low and plaintive murmuring
May well thy heart beguile,
And when thou weep'st along with me,
Through tears no longer may'st thou see
That fairy Indian Isle.

Among the Cambrian hills we stand!
By dear compulsion chained unto the strand
Of a still Lake, yet sleeping in the mist,
The thin blue mist that beautifies the morning;
Old Snowdon's gloomy brow the sun hath kissed,
Till, rising like a giant from his bed,
High o'er the mountainous sea he lifts his head,
The loneliness of Nature's reign adorning
With a calm majesty and pleasing dread.
A spirit is singing from the coves
Yet dim and dark; that spirit loves
To sing unto the Dawn,
When first he sees the shadowy veil,
As if by some slow-stealing gale,
From her fair face withdrawn.
How the Lake brightens while we gaze!
Impatient for the flood of rays
That soon will bathe its breast;
Where rock, and hill, and cloud, and sky,
Even like its peaceful self, will lie
Ere long in perfect rest.
The dawn hath brightened into day:
Blessings be on you crescent-bay,
Beloved in former years!
Dolbardan! at this silent hour,
More solemn far thy lonely tower
Unto my soul appears,
Than when, in days of roaming youth,
I saw thee first, and scarce could tell

If thou wert frowning there in truth,
Or only raised by Fancy's spell,
An airy tower 'mid an unearthly dell.

O! wildest Bridge, by human hand e'er framed!
If so thou mayst be named:
Thou! who for many a year hast stood
Clothed with the deep-green moss of age,
As if thy tremulous length were living wood,
Sprung from the bank on either side,
Despising, with a careless pride,
The tumults of the wintry flood,
And hill-born tempest's rage.
Each flower upon thy moss I know,
Or think I know; like things they seem
Fair and unchanged of a returning dream!
While underneath, the peaceful flow
Of the smooth river to my heart
Brings back the thoughts that long ago
I felt, when forced to part
From the deep calm of Nature's reign,
To walk the world's loud scenes again.
And let us with that river glide
Around yon hillock's verdant side;
And lo! a gleam of sweet surprise,
Like sudden sunshine, warms thine eyes.
White as the spring's unmelted snow,
That lives though winter storms be o'er,
A Cot beneath the mountain's brow
Smiles through its shading sycamore.
The silence of the morning air
Persuades our hearts to enter there.
In dreams all quiet things we love;
And sure no star that lies above,
Cradled in clouds, that also sleep,
Enjoys a calm more husht and deep
Than doth this slumbering cell:
Yea! like a star it looketh down
In pleasure from its mountain-throne,
On its own little dell.

A lovelier form now meets mine eye,
Than the loveliest cloud that sails the sky!
And human feelings blend

With the pleasure born of the glistening air,
As in our dreams uprises fair
The face of a dear friend.
A vision glides before my brain,
Like her who lives beyond the Main!
Breathing delight, the beauteous flower
That Heaven had raised to grace this bower.
To me this field is holy ground!
Her voice is speaking in the sound
That cheers the streamlet's bed.
Sweet Maiden!—side by side we stand,
While gently moves beneath my hand
Her soft and silky head.
A moment's pause! and as I look
On the silent cot and the idle brook,
And the face of the quiet day,
I know from all that many a year
Hath slowly past in sorrow here,
Since Mary went away.
But that wreath of smoke now melting thin,
Tells that some being dwells within;
And the balmy breath that stole
From the rose-tree, and jasmin, clustering wide
O'er all the dwelling's blooming side,
Tells that whoe'er doth there abide,
Must have a gentle soul.

Then gently breathe, and softly tread,
As if thy steps were o'er the dead!
Break not the slumber of the air,
Even by the whisper of a prayer,
But in thy spirit let there be
A silent "Benedicite!"
Thine eye falls on the vision bright,
As she sits amid the lonely light
That gleams from her cottage-hearth:
O! fear not to gaze on her with love!
For, though these looks are from above,
She is a form of earth.
In the silence of her long distress,
She sits with pious stateliness;
As if she felt the eye of God
Were on her childless lone abode.
While her lips move with silent vows,
With saintly grace the phantom bows

Over a Book spread open on her knee.
O blessèd Book! such thoughts to wake!
It tells of Him who for our sake
Died on the cross,—Our Saviour's History.
How beauteously hath sorrow shed
Its mildness round her aged head!
How beauteously her sorrow lies
In the solemn light of her faded eyes!
And lo! a faint and feeble trace
Of hope yet lingers on her face,
That she may yet embrace again
Her child, returning from the Main;
For the brooding dove shall leave her nest,
Sooner than hope a mother's breast.

Her long-lost child may still survive!
That thought hath kept her wasted heart alive;
And often, to herself unknown,
Hath mingled with the midnight sigh,
When she breathed, in a voice of agony,
"Now every hope is gone!"
'Twas this that gave her strength to look
On the mossy banks of the singing brook,
Where Mary oft had played;
And duly, at one stated hour,
To go in calmness to the bower
Built in her favourite glade.
'Twas this that made her, every morn,
As she blessed it, bathe the ancient thorn
With water from the spring;
And gently tend each floweret's stalk,
For she called to mind who loved to walk
Through their fragrant blossoming.
Yea! the voice of hope oft touched her ear
From the hymn of the lark that carolled clear,
Through the heart of the silent sky.
"Oh! such was my Mary's joyful strain!
And such she may haply sing again
Before her Mother die."
Thus hath she lived for seven long years,
With gleams of comfort through her tears;
Thus hath that beauty to her face been given!
And thus though silver grey her hair,
And pale her cheek, yet is she fair
As any Child of Heaven!

Yet, though she thus in calmness sit,
Full many a dim and ghastly fit
Across her brain hath rolled:
Oft hath she swooned away from pain;
And when her senses came again,
Her heart was icy-cold.
Hard hath it been for her to bear
The dreadful silence of the air
At night, around her bed;
When her waking thoughts through the darkness grew
Hideous as dreams, and for truth she knew
That her dear child was dead.
Things loved before seem altered quite,
The sun himself yields no delight,
She hears not the neighbouring waterfall,
Or, if she hear, the tones recall
The thought of her, who once did sing
So sweetly to its murmuring.
No summer-gale, no winter-blast,
By day or night o'er her cottage passed,
If her restless soul did wake,
That brought not a Ship before her eyes;
Yea! often dying shrieks and cries
Sailed o'er Llanberris Lake,
Though, far as the charmed eye could view,
Upon the quiet earth it lay,
Like the Moon amid the heavenly way,
As bright and silent too.

Hath she no friend whose heart may share
With her the burthen of despair,
And by her earnest, soothing voice,
Bring back the image of departed joys
So vividly, that reconciled
To the drear silence of her cot,
At times she scarcely miss her child?
Or, the wild raving of the sea forgot,
Hear nought amid the calm profound,
Save Mary's voice, a soft and silver sound?
No! seldom human footsteps come
Unto her childless widowed home;
No friend like this o'er sits beside her fire:
For still doth selfish happiness
Keep far away from real distress,
Loth to approach, and eager to retire.

The vales are wide, the torrents deep,
Dark are the nights, the mountains steep,
And many a cause, without a name,
Will from our spirits hide the blame,
When, thinking of ourselves, we cease
To think upon another's peace ;
Though one short hour to sorrow given,
Would cheer the gloom, and win the applause of Heaven.
Yet, when by chance they meet her on the hill,
Or lonely wandering by the sullen rill,
By its wild voice to dim seclusion led,
The shepherds linger on their way,
And unto God in silence pray,
To bless her hoary head.
In churchyard on the Sabbath-day
They all make room for her, even they
Whose tears are falling down in showers
Upon the fading funeral flowers,
Which they have planted o'er their children's clay.
And though her faded cheeks be dry,
Her breast unmoved by groan or sigh,
More piteous is one single smile
Of hers, than many a tear ;
For she is wishing all the while
That her head were lying here ;
Since her dear daughter is no more,
Drowned in the sea, or buried on the shore.

A sudden thought her brain hath crossed ;
And in that thought all woes are lost,
Though sad and wild it be :
Why must she still, from year to year,
In lonely anguish linger here ?
Let her go, ere she die, unto the coast,
And dwell beside the sea ;
The sea that tore her child away,
When glad would she have been to stay.
An awful comfort to her soul
To hear the sleepless Ocean roll !
To dream, that on his boundless breast,
Somewhere her long-wept child might rest
On some far island wrecked, yet blest
Even as the sunny wave.
Or, if indeed her child is drowned,
For ever let her drink the sound

That day and night still murmurs round
Her Mary's distant grave.
—She will not stay another hour;
Her feeble limbs with youthful power
Now feel endowed; she hath ta'en farewell
Of her native stream, and hill and dell;
And with a solemn tone
Upon the bower implores a blessing,
Where often she had sate caressing
Her who, she deems, is now a saint in Heaven.
Upon her hearth the fire is dead,
The smoke in air hath vanishèd;
The last long lingering look is given,
The shuddering start,—the inward groan,—
And the Pilgrim on her way hath gone.

Behold her on the lone sea-shore,
Listening unto the hollow roar
That with eternal thunder, far and wide,
Clothes the black-heaving Main! she stands
Upon the cold and moistened sands,
Nor in that deep trance sees the quickly-flowing tide.
She feels it is a dreadful noise,
That in her bowèd soul destroys
A Mother's hope, though blended with her life;
But surely she hath lost her child,
For how could one so weak and mild
Endure the Ocean's strife,
Who, at this moment of dismay,
Howls like a monster o'er his prey!
But the tide is rippling at her feet,
And the murmuring sound, so wildly sweet,
Dispels these torturing dreams:
Oh! once again the sea behold,
O'er all its wavy fields of gold,
The playful sunlight gleams.
These little harmless waves so fair,
Speak not of sorrow or despair;
How soft the zephyr's breath!
It sings like joy's own chosen sound;
While life and pleasure dance around,
Why must thou muse on death?
Here even the timid child might come,
To dip her small feet in the foam;
And, laughing as she viewed

The billows racing to the shore,
Lament when their short course was o'er,
Pursuing and pursued.
How calmly floats the white sea-mew
Amid the billows' verdant hue!
How calmly mounts into the air,
As if the breezes blew her there!
How calmly on the sand alighting,
To dress her silken plumes delighting!
See! how these tiny vessels glide
With all sails set, in mimic pride,
As they were ships of war.
All leave the idle port to-day,
And with oar and sheet the sunny bay
Is glancing bright and far.

She sees the joy, but feels it not:
If e'er her child should be forgot
For one short moment of oblivious sleep,
It seems a wrong to one so kind,
Whose mother, left on earth behind,
Hath nought to do but weep.
For, wandering in her solitude,
Tears seem to her the natural food
Of widowed childless age;
And bitter though these tears must be,
Which falling there is none to see,
Her anguish they assuage.
A calm succeeds the storm of grief,
A settled calm, that brings relief,
And half partakes of pleasure, soft and mild;
For the spirit, that is sore distrest,
At length, when wearied into rest,
Will slumber like a child.
And then, in spite of all her woe,
The bliss, that charmed her long ago,
Bursts on her like the day.
Her child, she feels, is living still,
By God and angels kept from ill
On some isle far away.
It is not doomed that she must mourn
For ever;—One may yet return
Who soon will dry her tears:
And now that seven long years are flown,

Though spent in anguish and alone,
How short the time appears!
She looks upon the billowy main,
And the parting-day returns again;
Each breaking wave she knows;
And when she listens to the tide,
Her child seems standing by her side;
So like the past it flows.
She starts to hear the city-bell;
So tolled it when they wept farewell!
She thinks the self-same smoke and cloud
The city domes and turrets shroud;
The same keen flash of ruddy fire
Is burning on the lofty spire;
The grove of masts is standing there
Unchanged, with all their ensigns fair;
The same, the stir, the tumult, and the hum,
As from the city to the shore they come.

Day after day, along the beach she roams,
And evening finds her there, when to their homes
All living things have gone.
No terrors hath the surge or storm
For her; on glides the aged form,
Still restless and alone.
Familiar unto every eye
She long hath been: her low deep sigh
Hath touched with pity many a thoughtless breast:
And prayers, unheard by her, are given,
That in its mercy watchful Heaven
Would send the aged rest.
As on the smooth and hardened sand,
In many a gay and rosy band,
Gathering rare shells, delighted children stray,
With pitying gaze they pass along,
And hush at once the shout and song,
When they chance to cross her way.
The strangers, as they idly pace
Along the beach, if her they meet,
No more regard the sea: her face
Attracts them by its solemn grace,
So mournful, yet so sweet.
The boisterous sailor passes by
With softer step, and o'er his eye
A haze will pass most like unto a tear;

For he hath heard, that, broken-hearted,
Long, long ago, that mother parted
With her lost daughter here.
Such kindness soothes her soul, I ween,
As through the harbour's busy scene,
She passes weak and slow.
A comfort sad it brings to see
That others pity her, though free
Themselves from care or woe.

The playful voice of streams and rills,
The echo of the caverned hills,
The murmur of the trees,
The bleat of sheep, the song of bird,
Within her soul no more are heard ;
There, sound for aye the seas.
Seldom she hears the ceaseless din
That stirs the busy port. Within
A murmur dwells, that drowns all other sound :
And oft, when dreaming of her child,
Her tearful eyes are wandering wild,
Yet nought behold around.
But hear and see she must this day ;
Her sickening spirit must obey
The flashing and the roar
That burst from fort, and ship, and tower,
While clouds of gloomy splendour lower
O'er city, sea, and shore.
The pier-head, with a restless crowd,
Seems all alive ; there, voices loud
Oft raise the thundrous cheer,
While, from on board the ship of war,
The music bands both near and far
Are playing, faint or clear.
The bells ring quick a joyous peal,
Till the very spires appear to feel
The joy that stirs throughout their tapering height.
Ten thousand flags and pendants fly
Abroad, like meteors in the sky,
So beautiful and bright.
And, while the storm of pleasure raves
Through each tumultuous street,
Still strikes the ear one darling tune,
Sung hoarse, or warbled sweet ;

Well doth it suit the First of June,
"Britannia rule the Waves!"

What Ship is she that rises slow
Above the horizon?—White as snow,
And covered as she sails
By the bright sunshine, fondly wooed
In her calm beauty, and pursued
By all the Ocean gales?
Well doth she know this glorious morn,
And by her subject waves is borne,
As in triumphal pride:
And now the gazing crowd descry,
Distinctly floating on the sky,
Her pendants long and wide,
The outward forts she now hath passed;
Loftier and loftier towers her mast;
You almost hear the sound
Of the billows rushing past her sides,
As giant-like she calmly glides
Through the dwindled ships around.
Saluting thunders rend the Main!
Short silence!—and they roar again,
And veil her in a cloud:
Then up leap all her fearless crew,
And cheer, till shore, and city too,
With echoes answer loud.
In peace and friendship doth she come,
Rejoicing to approach her home,
After absence long and far:
Yet with like calmness would she go,
Exulting to behold the foe,
And break the line of war.

While all the noble Ship admire,
Why doth One from the crowd retire,
Nor bless the stranger bright?
So looked the Ship that bore away
Her weeping child! She dares not stay,
Death-sickening at the sight.
Like a ghost, she wanders up and down
Throughout the still deserted town,
Wondering, if in that noisy throng,
Amid the shout, the dance, the song,

One wretched heart there may not be,
That hates its own mad revelry!
One mother, who hath lost her child,
Yet in her grief is reconciled
To such unmeaning sounds as these.
Yet this may be the mere disease
Of grief with her: for why destroy
The few short hours of human joy,
Though Reason own them not?—"Shout on," she cries,
"Ye thoughtless, happy souls! A mother's sighs
Must not your bliss profane.
Yet blind must be that mother's heart
Who loves thee, beauteous as thou art,
Thou Glory of the Main!"

Towards the churchyard see the Matron turn!
There surely she in solitude may mourn,
Tormented not by such distracting noise.
But there seems no peace for her this day,
For a crowd advances on her way,
As if no spot were sacred from their joys.
—Fly not that crowd! for Heaven is there!
It breathes around thee in the air,
Even now, when unto dim despair
Thy heart was sinking fast:
A cruel lot hath long been thine;
But now let thy face with rapture shine,
For bliss awaiteth thee divine,
And all thy woes are past.
Dark words she hears among the crowd,
Of a ship that hath on board
Three Christian souls, who on the coast
Of some wild land were wrecked long years ago,
When all but they were in a tempest lost,
And now by Heaven are rescued from their woe,
And to their country wondrously restored.
The name, the blessèd name, she hears,
Of that beloved Youth,
Whom once she called her son; but fears
To listen more, for it appears
Too heavenly for the truth.
And they are speaking of a child,
Who looks more beautifully wild
Than pictured fairy in Arabian tale;

Wondrous her foreign garb, they say,
Adorned with starry plumage gay,
While round her head tall feathers play,
And dance with every gale.

Breathless upon the beach she stands,
And lifts to Heaven her claspèd hands,
And scarcely dares to turn her eye
On yon gay barge fast rushing by.
The dashing oar disturbs her brain
With hope, that sickens into pain.
The boat appears so wondrous fair,
Her daughter must be sitting there!
And as her gilded prow is dancing
Through the land-swell, and gaily glancing
Beneath the sunny gleams,
Her heart must own, so sweet a sight,
So formed to yield a strange delight,
She ne'er felt even in dreams.
Silent the music of the oar!
The eager sailors leap on shore,
And look, and gaze around,
If 'mid the crowd they may descry
A wife's, a child's, a kinsman's eye,
Or hear one family sound.
—No sailor, he, so fondly pressing
Yon fair child in his arms,
Her eyes, her brow, her bosom kissing,
And bidding her with many a blessing
To hush her vain alarms.
How fair that creature by his side,
Who smiles with languid glee,
Slow-kindling from a mother's pride!
Oh! Thou alone may'st be
The mother of that fairy child:
These tresses dark, these eyes so wild,
That face with spirit beautified,
She owes them all to thee.

Silent and still the sailors stand,
To see the meeting strange that now befell.
Unwilling sighs their manly bosoms swell,
And o'er their eyes they draw the sun-burnt hand,
To hide the tears that grace their cheeks so well.

They lift the aged Matron from her swoon,
And not one idle foot is stirring there ;
For unto pity melts the sailor soon,
And chief when helpless woman needs his care
She wakes at last, and with a placid smile,
Such as a saint might on her deathbed give,
Speechless she gazes on her child awhile,
Content to die since that dear one doth live.
And much they fear that she indeed will die !
So cold and pale her cheek, so dim her eye ;—
And when her voice returns, so like the breath
It sounds, the low and tremulous tones of death.
Mark her distracted daughter seize
Her clay-cold hands, and on her knees
Implore that God would spare her hoary head ;
For sure, through these last lingering years,
By one so good, enough of tears
Hath long ere now been shed.
The Fairy-child is weeping too ;
For though her happy heart can slightly know
What she hath never felt, the pang of woe,
Yet to the holy power of Nature true,
From her big heart the tears of pity flow,
As infant morning sheds the purest dew.
Nought doth Fitz-Owen speak : he takes
His reverend mother on his filial breast,
Nor fears that, when her worn-out soul finds rest
In the new sleep of undisturbèd love,
The gracious God who sees them from above,
Will save the parent for her children's sakes.

Nor vain his pious hope : the strife
Of rapture ends, and she returns to life,
With added beauty smiling in the lines
By age and sorrow left upon her face.
Her eye, even now bedimmed with anguish, shines
With brightening glory, and a holy sense
In her husht soul of heavenly providence,
Breathes o'er her bending frame a loftier grace.
—Her Mary tells in simple phrase,
Of wildest perils past in former days,
Of shipwreck scarce remembered by herself ;
Then will she speak of that delightful isle,
Where long they lived in love, and to the elf

Now fondly clinging to her grandam's knee,
In all the love of quick-won infancy,
Point with the triumph of a mother's smile.
The sweet child then will tell her tale
Of her own blossomed bower, and palmy vale,
And birds with golden plumes, that sweetly sing
Tunes of their own, or borrowed from her voice;
And, as she speaks, lo! flits with gorgeous wing
Upon her outstretched arm, a fearless bird,
Her eye obeying, ere the call was heard,
And wildly warbles there the music of its joys.

Unto the blessèd Matron's eye
How changed seem now town, sea, and sky!
She feels as if to youth restored,
Such fresh and beauteous joy is poured
O'er the green dancing waves, and shelly sand.
The crowded masts within the harbour stand,
Emblems of rest: and yon ships far away,
Brightening the entrance of the Crescent-bay,
Seem things the tempest never can destroy,
To longing spirits harbingers of joy.
How sweet the music o'er the waves is borne,
In celebration of this glorious morn!
Ring on, ye bells! most pleasant is your chime;
And the quick flash that bursts along the shore,
The volumed smoke, and city-shaking roar,
Her happy soul now feels to be sublime.
How fair upon the human face appears
A kindling smile! how idle all our tears!
Short-sighted still the moistened eyes of sorrow:
To-day our woes can never end,
Think we!—returns a long-lost friend,
And we are blest to-morrow.
Her anguish, and her wish to die,
Now seem like worst impiety,
For many a year she hopeth now to live;
And God, who sees the inmost breast,
The vain repining of the sore distrest,
In mercy will forgive.

How oft, how long, and solemnly,
Fitz-Owen and his Mary gaze
On her pale cheek, and sunken eye!

Much altered since those happy days,
When scarcely could themselves behold
One symptom faint that she was waxing old.
That evening of her life how bright!
But now seems falling fast the night.
Yet the Welsh air will breathe like balm
Through all her wasted heart, the heavenly calm
That 'mid her native mountains sleeps for ever,
In the deep vales,—even when the storms are roaring,
High up among the cliffs: and that sweet river
That round the white walls of her cottage flows,
With gliding motion most like to repose,
A quicker current to her blood restoring,
Will cheer her long before her eyelids close.
And yonder cheek of rosy light,
Dark-clustering hair, and star-like eyes,
And Fairy-form, that winged with rapture flies,
And voice more wild than songstress of the night
E'er poured unto the listening skies;
You spirit, who, with her angel smile,
Shed Heaven around the lonely isle,
With Nature, and with Nature's art,
Will twine herself about the heart
Of her who hoped not for a grandchild's kiss!
These looks will scare disease and pain,
Till in her wasted heart again
Life grow with new-born bliss.

Far is the city left behind,
And faintly-smiling through the soft-blue skies,
Like castled clouds the Cambrian hills arise:
Sweet the first welcome of the mountain-wind!
And ever nearer as they come,
Beneath the hastening shades of silent Even,
Some old familiar object meets their sight,
Thrilling their hearts with sorrowful delight,
Until through tears they hail their blessèd home,
Bathed in the mist, confusing earth with heaven.
With solemn gaze the aged matron sees
The green roof laughing beneath greener trees;
And thinks how happy she will live and die
Within that cot at last, beneath the eye
Of them long wept as perished in the seas.
And what feel they? with dizzy brain they look
On cot, field, mountain, garden, tree, and brook,

With none contented, althoughloving all ;
While deep-delighted memory,
By faint degrees, and silently,
Doth all their names recall.
And looking in her mother's face,
With smiles of most bewitching grace,
In a wild voice that wondering pleasure calms,
Exclaims the child, "Is this home ours?
Ah me! how like these lovely flowers
To those I trained upon the bowers
Of our own Isle of Palms!"

Hushed now these island-bowers as death!
And ne'er may human foot or breath,
Their dew disturb again ; but not more still
Stand they, o'ershadowed by their palmy hill,
Than this deserted cottage! O'er the green,
Once smooth before the porch, rank weeds are seen,
Choking the feebler flowers : with blossoms hoar,
And verdant leaves, the unpruned eglantine
In wanton beauty foldeth up the door.
And through the clustering roses that entwine
The lattice-window, neat and trim before,
The setting sun's slant beams no longer shine.
The hive stands on the ivied tree,
But murmurs not one single bee ;
Frail looks the osier-seat, and grey,
None hath sat there for many a day ;
And the dial, hid in weeds and flowers,
Hath told, by none beheld, the solitary hours.
No birds that love the haunts of men,
Hop here, or through the garden sing :
From the thick-matted hedge, the lonely wren
Flits rapid by on timid wing,
Even like a leaf by wandering zephyr moved.
But long it is since that sweet bird,
That twitters 'neath the cottage eaves,
Was here by listening morning heard :
For she, the summer-songstress, leaves
The roof by laughter never stirred,
Still loving human life, and by it still beloved.

O! wildest cottage of the wild!
I see thee waking from thy breathless sleep!

Scarcely distinguished from the rocky steep,
High o'er thy roof in forms fantastic piled.
More beauteous art thou than of yore,
With joy all glistering after sorrow's gloom;
And they who in that paradise abide,
By sadness and misfortune beautified,
There brighter walk than o'er yon island shore,
As loveliness wakes lovelier from the tomb.
Long may'st thou stand in sun and dew,
And spring thy faded flowers renew,
Unharmed by frost or blight!
Without, the wonder of each eye,
Within, as happy as the sky,
Encompassed with delight.
—May thy old age be calm and bright,
Thou grey-haired one!—like some sweet night
Of winter, cold, but clear, and shining far
Through mists, with many a melancholy star.
—O Fairy-child! what can I wish for thee?
Like a perennial floweret may'st thou be,
That spends its life in beauty and in bliss!
Soft on thee fall the breath of time,
And still retain in heavenly clime
The bloom that charmed in this!

O, happy Parents of so sweet a child,
Your share of grief already have you known;
But long as that fair spirit is your own,
To either lot you must be reconciled.
Dear was she in yon palmy grove,
When fear and sorrow mingled with your love,
And oft you wished that she had ne'er been born;
While in the most delightful air
The angelic infant sang, at times her voice,
That seemed to make even lifeless things rejoice,
Woke, on a sudden, dreams of dim despair,
As if it breathed, "For me, an Orphan, mourn!"
Now can they listen when she sings
With mournful voice of mournful things,
Almost too sad to hear;
And when she chants her evening-hymn,
Glad smile their eyes, even as they swim
With many a gushing tear.
Each day she seems to them more bright
And beautiful,—a gleam of light

That plays and dances o'er the shadowy earth!
It fadeth not in gloom or storm,—
For Nature chartered that aërial form
In yonder fair Isle when she blessed her birth!
The Isle of Palms! whose forests tower again,
Darkening with solemn shade the face of heaven.
Now far away they like the clouds are driven,
And as the passing night-wind dies my strain!

THE CITY OF THE PLAGUE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Time, the Afternoon.—Two Naval Officers walking along the banks of the Thames.—They sit down on a stone seat fronting the river.

Frankfort. My heart feels heavier every step I take
Towards the city. Oh! that I could drop
Down like a bird upon its nest at once
Into my mother's house. There might my soul
Find peace, even 'mid the silent emptiness
That told me she had perished.
Wilmot. All around
Appears so bright, so tranquil, and so calm,
That happy omens rise on every side,
To strengthen and support us in our fears.
Frank. Oh Wilmot! to my soul a field of graves,
A churchyard filled with marble monuments,
Profoundly hushed in death's own sanctity,
Seems not more alien to the voice of Hope,
Than that wide wilderness of domes and spires,
Hanging o'er the breathless city.
Wil. See! my friend,
How bright the sunshine dances in its joy
O'er the still flow of this majestic river.

I know not how, but gazing on that light
So beautiful, all images of death
Fade from my rousèd soul, and I believe
That our journey here must end in happiness.
Frank. Is it the hour of prayer?
Wil. The evening service,
Methinks, must now be closed.
Frank. There comes no sound
Of organ-peal or choral symphony
From yonder vast cathedral. How it stands
Amid the silent houses, with a strange
Deep silence of its own! I could believe
That many a Sabbath had passed prayerless on
Within its holy solitude. No knee
This day, methinks, hath bent before its altar.
Wil. It is a solemn pile! yet to mine eye
There rests above its massive sanctity
The clear blue air of peace.
Frank. A solemn pile!
Ay! there it stands, like a majestic ruin,
Mouldering in a desert; in whose silent heart
No sound hath leave to dwell. I knew it once,
When music in that chosen temple raised
The adoring soul to Heaven. But one dread year
Hath done the work of ages; and the Plague
Mocks in his fury the slow hand of time.
Wil. The sun smiles on its walls.
Frank. Why does the finger,
Yellow 'mid the sunshine on the Minster-clock,
Point at that hour? It is most horrible,
Speaking of midnight in the face of day.
During the very dead of night it stopped,
Even at the moment when a hundred hearts
Paused with it suddenly, to beat no more.
Yet, wherefore should it run its idle round?
There is no need that men should count the hours
Of time, thus standing on eternity.
It is a death-like image.
Wil. I could smile
At such fantastic terrors.
Frank. How can I,
When round me silent Nature speaks of death,
Withstand such monitory impulses?
When yet far off I thought upon the plague,
Sometimes my mother's image struck my soul

In unchanged meekness and serenity,
And all my fears were gone. But these green banks,
With an unwonted flush of flowers o'ergrown,
Brown, when I left them last, with frequent feet,
From morn till evening hurrying to and fro,
In mournful beauty seem encompassing
A still forsaken city of the dead.

Wil. It is the Sabbath-day—the day of rest.

Frank. O unrejoicing Sabbath ! not of yore
Did thy sweet evenings die along the Thames
Thus silently ! Now every sail is furled,
The oar hath dropt from out the rower's hand,
And on thou flowest in lifeless majesty,
River of a desert lately filled with joy !
O'er all that mighty wilderness of stone
The air is clear and cloudless as at sea
Above the gliding ship. All fires are dead,
And not one single wreath of smoke ascends
Above the stillness of the towers and spires.
How idly hangs that arch magnificent.
Across the idle river ! Not a speck
Is seen to move along it. There it hangs,
Still as a rainbow in the pathless sky.

Wil. Methinks such words bespeak a soul at rest,
And willing, in this universal calm,
To abide, whate'er it be, the doom of Fate.

Frank. I feel as if such solemn images
Of desolation had recalled my soul
From its own individual wretchedness ;
As if one moment I forgot my parent,
And all the friends I love, in the sublime
And overwhelming presence of mortality.

Wil. Now, that your soul feels strong, let us proceed,
With humble hope, towards your mother's house.

Frank. No, friend ! here must we part ! If e'er again
We meet in this sad world, thou may'st behold
A wretch bow'd down to the earth by misery,
Ghost-like 'mid living men ; but rest assured
O gentlest friend ! that, though my soul be dead
To all beside, at sight of thee 'twill burn
As with the everlasting fires of joy,
Bursting its bonds of mortal wretchedness.

Wil. We must not—will not part.

Frank. Now, and for ever.
I walk into yon city as the tomb !

A voice comes to me from its silent towers,
"Mortal, thy days are numbered!" Ere I go,
Kiss me, and promise that my name shall live
Sacred for ever in thy memory.

Wil. We must not—will not part.

Frank. What said my friend?

Wil. Here, by my father's soul (a fearless man,
Who used to say he never loved his friends
But in their combats with adversity),
I swear (and may we never meet in Heaven
If that dread oath be broken!) day and night,
Long as thou sojourn'st on thy work of love
Within this plague-struck city, at thy side
To move for ever an attending shadow;
Amid the silence or the shrieks of death,
Serene in unappallèd confidence,
That thou wilt walk unharmed, wilt find the house
Of thy parent, and her holy family,
Passed over by the angel of the Lord!
For the blessings of the poor have sanctified
The widow's lowly porch—life still is there.

Frank. O friend! most cruel from excess of love!
In all the beauty of thy untamed spirit
Thou walkest to perdition. Do not I
Look, as I feel, most like thy murderer?
Return unto our ship.

Wil. Frankfort, remember,
When the wild cry, "A man is overboard,"
Rung through our decks, till dumb and motionless
Stood the whole crew, fear-stricken by the storm,
Who at that moment leapt into the sea,
And seized the drowning screamer by the hair?
Who was that glorious being? Who the wretch
Then rescued from the waves? I loved thee well
Before I hung upon thy saving arm
Above the angry waves. But, from that hour,
I felt my soul called on by Providence
To dedicate itself for aye to thee,
And God's will must be done.

Frank. Wilmot, dost think
My mother can be living?

Wil. The soul oft feels
Mysterious presence of realities
Coming we know not whence, yet banishing

With power omnipotent all misgiving fears.
So feel I at this moment—she is living.

Frank. O God forbid, that I should place belief
In these dim shadowings of futurity!
Here, on this very spot where we now rest,
Upon the morning I last sailed from England,
My mother put her arms around my neck,
And in a solemn voice, unchoked by tears,
Said, "Son, a last farewell!" That solemn voice,
Amid the ocean's roaring solitude,
Oft passed across my soul, and I have heard it
Steal in sad music from the sunny calm.
Upon our homeward voyage, when we spake
The ship that told us of the Plague, I knew
That the trumpet's voice would send unto our souls
Some dismal tidings; for I saw her sails
Black in the distance, flinging off with scorn
A shower of radiance from the blessed sun,
As if her crew would not be comforted.

Wil. The weakness of affection, prone to fear!
Be comforted by me— my very dreams
Of late have all been joyous.

Frank. Joyous dreams!
My hours of sleep are now but few indeed,
Yet what have I still dreamt of? healthful faces,
Round a sweet fireside, bright with gratitude!
The soft voice of domestic happiness?
Laughter disturbing with the stir of joy
The reveries of the spirit?—Oh! my friend!
Far other sounds and sights have filled my dreams!
Still noiseless floors, untrod by human feet;
Chairs standing rueful in their emptiness;
An unswept hearth choked up by dust and ashes;
Beds with their curtains idly hanging down
Unmoved by the breath of life: wide open windows,
That the fresh air might purify the room
From vapours of the noisome pestilence;
In a dark chamber, ice-cold like a tomb,
A corpse laid out—O God! my mother's corpse,
Woefully altered by a dire decay;
While my stunned spirit shuddered at the toll,
The long, slow, dreary, sullen, mortal toll
Of a bell swinging to the hand of death.
But this is idle raving—hope is gone—
And fears and apprehensions, day and night,
Drive where they will my unresisting soul.

Wil. But that it is daylight, I could believe
That yonder, moving by the river-side,
Came on a ghost. Did ever eye behold
A thing so death-like in the shape of man?

(*An Old Man of a miserable and squalid appearance comes up, carrying an infant in his arms.*)

Frank. God's blessing on thee! wilt thou rest, old man,
Upon this traveller's seat?

Old Man. God's blessing on thee!
What, dost thou mean to taunt with mockery
An old man tottering to the grave? What pleasure
Can ye young wretches find in scoffing thus
At the white head of hungered beggary?
Have ye no fathers? Well it is for them
That their dry hearts are spared the bitterness
Of seeing, in the broad and open day,
Their reckless children sporting with old age.

Frank. Father, judge kindly of us.

Old Man. Let me go
Untroubled on my way. Do you pity me?
Then give me alms: this thing upon my arm
Is teasing me for food: I have it not—
Give me your alms.

Frank. See! here is bread, old man!
I ask your blessing—come you from the city,
And none to guide your steps along the brink
Of this great river?

Old Man. Yea! they are all dead
Who once did walk with me most lovingly,
Slowlier than these slow steps. This piece of wood,
This staff, is all I have to lean on now,
And this poor baby, whom its nurse would give
For a short pastime to his grandsire's arms,
No other nurse hath now, but withered age—
Sour, sullen, hopeless, God-forsaken age.

Frank. Is the plague raging?

Old Man. Ay, and long will rage.
The judgments of the prophets of old time
Are now fulfilling. Young men! turn and flee
From the devoted city. Would ye hear
What new is passing in yon monster's heart?

Frank. We listen to thy voice.

Old Man. Three months ago,
Within my soul I heard a mighty sound
As of a raging river, day and night

Triumphing through the city : 'twas the voice
Of London sleepless in magnificence.
This morn I stood and listened. "Art thou dead,
Queen of the world!" I asked my awe-struck heart,
And not one breath of life amid the silence
Disturbed the empire of mortality.
Death's icy hand hath frozen, with a touch,
The fountain of the river that made glad
The City of the Isle! ·

Frank. We hear thy voice.

Old Man. Sin brought the judgment : it was terrible.
Go read your Bible, young men ; hark to him
Who, in a vision, saw the Lion rage
Amid the towers of Judah, while the people
Fell on their faces, and the hearts of kings
Perished, and prophets wondered in their fear.
Then came the dry wind from the wilderness,
Towards the hill of Sion, not to fan
Or cleanse, but, whirlwind-like, to sweep away
The tents of princes and the men of war.

Frank. Wilmot! methinks most like an ancient prophet,
With those white locks and wild unearthly eyes,
He comes forth from the desolated city,
A man who cannot die.—O may I ask,
Most reverend father, if——

Old Man. Hush! hush! lie still!
Didst hear this infant cry? So small a sound
Ought not to startle thus a wretch who comes
From a three months' sojourn in a sepulchre.
Here! infant, eat this bread and hold thy peace.
Young men, disturb me not with foolish questions ;
Your faces are towards the city : Will ye dare
The monster in his den? Then go and die!
Two little drops amid a shower of rain,
Swallowed up in a moment by the heedless earth.

Frank. I fain would ask one question ; for, old man,
My parent lived in London, and I go
To seek her in that city of the tombs.

Old Man. Think of her with the dead! A ship at sea
(Methinks I speak unto a mariner)
Goes to the bottom. Would you hope to find
Your friend alone, of all the fated crew,
Alive on a plank next day amid the waves?
Think of her with the dead! and praise the Lord!

Wilmot. Let us begone, the day is wearing fast.

Old Man. Know ye what you will meet with in the city ?
Together will ye walk, through long, long streets,
All standing silent as a midnight church.
You will hear nothing but the brown red grass
Rustling beneath your feet ; the very beating
Of your own hearts will awe you ; the small voice
Of that vain bauble, idly counting time,
Will speak a solemn language in the desert.
Look up to heaven, and there the sultry clouds,
Still threatening thunder, lower with grim delight,
As if the Spirit of the Plague dwelt there,
Darkening the city with the shadows of death.
Know ye that hideous hubbub ? Hark, far off
A tumult like an echo ! on it comes,
Weeping and wailing, shrieks and groaning prayer ;
And louder than all, outrageous blasphemy.
The passing storm hath left the silent streets.
But are these houses near you tenantless ?
Over your heads from a window, suddenly
A ghastly face is thrust, and yells of death
With voice not human. Who is he that flies,
As if a demon dogged him on his path ?
With ragged hair, white face, and bloodshot eyes,
Raving, he rushes past you ; till he falls,
As if struck by lightning, down upon the stones,
Or, in blind madness, dashed against the wall,
Sinks backward into stillness. Stand aloof,
And let the Pest's triumphal chariot
Have open way advancing to the tomb.
See how he mocks the pomp and pageantry
Of earthly kings ! A miserable cart,
Heaped up with human bodies ; dragged along
By shrunk steeds, skeleton-anatomies !
And onwards urged by a wan meagre wretch,
Doomed never to return from the foul pit,
Whither with oaths, he drives his load of horror.
Would you look in ? Grey hairs and golden tresses,
Wan shrivelled cheeks that have not smiled for years ;
And many a rosy visage smiling still ;
Bodies in the noisome weeds of beggary wrapt,
With age decrepit, and wasted to the bone ;
And youthful frames, august and beautiful,
In spite of mortal pangs,—there lie they all
Embraced in ghastliness ! But look not long,
For haply, 'mid the faces glimmering there,

The well-known cheek of some beloved friend
Will meet thy gaze, or some small snow-white hand,
Bright with the ring that holds her lover's hair.
Let me sit down beside you. I am faint
Talking of horrors that I looked upon
At last without a shudder.
Frank. Give me the child.
Old Man. Let the wretch rest. 'Twas but a passing pang,
And I feel strong again.—Dost smile, poor babe?
Yes! Thou art glad to see the full-orbed eye,
The placid cheek, and sparkling countenance
Of ruddy health once more; and thou wouldst go
With them thy young heart thinks so beautiful,
Nor ever look behind at the old man
Who brought thee from the grave! Sweet thoughtless wretch,
I cling to thee with a more desperate love
Because of thy ingratitude.
Frank. Old man,
Is thy blood in his veins?
Old Man. All dead—all dead!
Round the baptismal font with awe we knelt,
My four sweet daughters and their loving husbands.
I held my last-born grandchild in my arms,
But as the hallowed water touched her face,
Even then she sickened, and a mortal paleness
Froze every parent's cheek. "The Plague is here!"
The priest exclaimed; and like so many ghosts,
We parted in the churchyard. O my God!
I know that Thou in wrath art merciful,
For Thou hast spared this babe for my old age!
But all who knelt round that baptismal font
Last Sabbath morning—one short week ago—
Are dead and buried—save one little child,
And a grey-headed man of fourscore years.
Frank. I dare not comfort thee.
Old Man. Why not, sweet youth?
Thy very voice is comfort—my dim eyes
Look on thee like a vision of delight
Coming back in beauty from th' abyss of years.
Let me hear thy voice once more.
Frank. Father! that book
With whose worn leaves the careless infant plays
Must be the Bible. Therein thy dim eyes
Will meet a cheering light, and silent words

Of mercy breathed from Heaven will be exhaled,
From the blest page, into thy withered heart.
The grace of God go with thee.
Old Man. Gentle youth
Thy voice reminds me of a boy who died
Thirty long years ago. Thou wilt pass on,
And we must meet no more; yet could I think
Thou wert my son returning from the grave,
Or from some far-off land where he had gone,
And left us to our tears.
Frank. They are not lost
Who leave their parents for the calm of heaven.
Forgive a young man speaking thus to age,
'Tis done in love and reverence.
Old Man. 'Tis the Bible!
I know and feel it is a blessèd book,
And I remember how it stopped my tears
In days of former sorrows, like some herb
Of sovereign virtue to a wound applied.
But thou wilt pity me, when I confess
That ofttimes more than mortal agony
Shoots through my heart, when the most holy words
Of Jesus shine before me. There I see
Miracles of mercy and of saving love:
The widow sings for joy,—deliverance
Comes to the madman howling in his chains,—
And life stirs in the tomb. I shut the book,
And wonder where I am; for all around me
Looks as if God had left this woeful earth
To ruin and despair, while his own word
Doth seem delusion, or with fearful doubts
My soul disturbs in sore perplexity.
To the Hebrew propheeies my spirit turns,
And feeds on wailing lamentations,
And dim forebodings of Almighty wrath.
Yea! often do I see this very Plague
By these wild seers foretold, and all their songs
So doleful speak unto my ringing ear
Of this dread visitation. Idle dreams
Of my old crazèd brain! But aye they haunt me,
And each plain phrase is clothed with mystic meaning
In spite of reason; sad bewildering!
When still the soul keeps fighting with its fetters,
Yet hugs them self-imposed.

Frank. Such dreams will vanish
When the sweet rural air, or breeze from the sea
Sinks round thee. Art thou going to a home
Where wife or child expect thee?
Old Man. Hush, sweet babe.
There is a dwelling on the lone sea-shore
Where I will carry thee.—An Angel's voice
Told me to leave the city. You will see her,
The Angel of the poor! Through every street
The radiant creature walks . . . . . .
Wil. (*to Frank*). Though dark his brain,
It has, thou seest, a heavenly visitor,
That comfort brings when reason's self is gone.
Old Man. 'Tis no delusion. When you see her face,
Her pale face smiling on you suddenly,
Pale almost as the raiment that she wears,
And hear her voice, all one low mournful tone,
Charming away despair, then will ye say
"The Angel this of whom the old man spake;"
Yet something lying far within her eyes
Will tell that she is mortal.—Fare ye well!
But list! sweet youths! where'er ye go, beware
Of those dread dwellings all round Aldgate Church,
For to me it seemeth that most dismal pile
Is the black Palace of the Plague, and none
May pass it by and live. God bless you both.
[*The Old Man passes on.*
Frank. His words have sent a curse into my heart.
The miserable spoke of misery
Even with his parting farewell. Aldgate Church!
Wil. He passeth like a shadow from the city!
A solemn traveller to the world of spirits.
Methought his hollow and unearthly voice
Came from the desolation of his soul,
Like the wind at midnight moaning past our ship,
A ghastly sound once heard and never more.
—Frankfort, speak to me.
Frank. All round Aldgate Church?
Said he not so? Close to that churchyard wall
My mother's dwelling stands: her bedroom window
Looks o'er the gravestones and the marble tombs.—
All hope is dead within me.
Wil. Shall I go
And ask the old man if he knows your mother?
Perhaps . . . . .

Frank. Oh! ask him not, an hour will bring us
In presence of the house where I was born.
I wish he had staid with us yet a while,
For his voice held me in captivity,
Wild voice and haggard cheek. He heeded not
Me or my sorrow—in his misery
Both blind and deaf, without the help of age.
Methinks I see the cold wet tombstone lying
Upon my father's grave—another name,
"Mary his wife," is graven .....
Wil. All have not perished.
Frank. What, hoping still! Come, let us onward walk
With heads uncovered, and with prostrate souls,
Unto the humbled city of despair.
Amid the roar of ocean-solitude
God hath been with us, and his saving hand
Will be our anchor in this dreadful calm,
This waveless silence of the sea of death.

SCENE II.

A great square in the city.—A multitude of miserable Men and Women crowding round a person of a wild and savage appearance, dressed in a fantastical garb with an hour-glass in his hand.

Astrologer. The sun is going down, and when he sets,
You know my accursèd gift of prophecy
Departeth from me, and I then become
Blind as my wretched brethren. Then the Plague
Riots in darkness 'mid his unknown victims,
Nor can I read the names within his roll
Now registered in characters of blood.
Come to me, all ye wearied, who would rest,
Who would exchange the fever's burning pillow
For the refreshing coolness of the grave!
Come hither, all ye orphans of a day,
And I will tell you when your heads shall rest
Upon your parents' bosoms. Yearn ye not
To clasp their shroudless bodies, and to lie
In the dark pit by love made beautiful?

Where are ye, veilèd widows? in the tomb
The marriage-lamp doth burn unquenchably.
Dry up your tears, fair virgins! to the grave
Betrothèd in your pure simplicity!
Still is one countenance beautiful in death,
And it will lean to-night upon a breast
White with the snows of perfect innocence.
—I call upon the wicked! let him show
His face among the crowd, and I will tell him
His dreams of horror and his works of sin.

(*A Man of a fierce and ferocious aspect advances from the crowd.*)

Stranger. I ask thee not, thou juggling driveller,
Whether the Plague hath fixed his eyes on me,
Determined to destroy. Let them who fear
Death and his pit, with pale beseeching hands
Buy with their monies the awards of fate,
And die in poverty. Thou speak'st of guilt,
And know'st forsooth each secret deed of sin
Done in the dark hour. Tell me, driveller!
Where I, who lay no claim to honesty,
Came by this gold. I'll give thee half of it
If thou speak'st truly. Was there robbery?

Astrologer. Flee, murderer! from my sight! I touch thy gold!
'Twould stain my fingers! See the blood-gouts on it.
Hither thou comest in savage hardihood,
Yet with a beating heart. I saw thee murder him:
What were his silver hairs, his tremulous voice,
His old blind eyes to thee!—Ha! shrinking off,
Awed by a driveller! Seize the murderer!
You will find the bloody knife——

[*The Man rushes off, and all make way for him.*

Mine eyes at once
Did read the murderer's soul.

Voice from the crowd. Guilt nor disease
Are hidden from his ken—he knows them all.

(*Two Women advance eagerly from the crowd.*)

1st Woman. Listen to me before that woman speaks.
I went this morning to my lover's house,
Mine own betrothèd husband, who had come
From sea two days ago. The house was empty;
As the cold grave that longeth for its coffin,
'Twas damp and empty; and I shrieked in vain
On him who would not hear. Tell me his fate,

Say that he lives, or say that he is dead—
But tell me,—tell me, lest I curse my God,
Some tidings of him ; shouldst thou see him lying
Even in you dreadful pit. Do you hear? speak, speak!
O God!—no words can be so terrible
As that mute face, whose blackness murders hope,
And freezes my sick soul. Heaven's curse light on thee,
For that dumb mockery of a broken heart!

Astrologer. I see him not, some cloud envelopes him!

Woman. He hath left the city then, and gone on shipboard?

Astrologer. I see him not, some cloud envelopes him!

Woman. What! hast thou not a wondrous glass that shows
Things past, or yet to come? give me one look,
That I may see his face so beautiful,
Where'er it be ; or in that ghastly pit,
Or smiling 'mid his comrades on the deck,
While favouring breezes waft his blessèd ship
Far from the Plague, to regions of delight,
Where he may live for ever.

Astrologer. Is your lover
A tall thin youth, with thickly-clustering locks,
Sable and glossy as the raven's wing?

Woman. Yes! he is tall—I think that he is tall ;
His hair it is dark-brown—yes, almost black—
Many call it black—you see him? Does he live?

Astrologer. That pit containeth many beautiful :
But thy sailor, in his warlike garb, doth lie
Distinguished o'er the multitude of dead!
And all the crowd, when the sad cart was emptied,
Did weep and sob for that young mariner ;
Such corpse, they thought, should have been buried
Deep in the ocean's heart, and a proud peal
Of thunder rolled above his sinking coffin.

Woman (*distractedly*). Must I believe him? off, off to the pit!
One look into that ghastliness,—one plunge :
None ever loved me but my gentle sailor,
And his sweet lips are cold—I will leap down.
[*She rushes madly away.*

Voice from the crowd. Ay, she intends to look before she leaps ;
Well—life is life—I would not part with it
For all the girls in Christendom. Forsooth!

2d Woman. Say! will my child recover from the Plague?

Astrologer. Child! foolish woman! now thou hast no child.
Hast thou not been from home these two long hours,
Here listening unto that which touched thee not,
And left'st thou not thy little dying child,
Sitting by the fire, upon a madman's knee?
Go home! and ask thy husband for thy child!
The fire was burning fierce and wrathfully,
Its father knew not that the thing he held
Upon his knee had life—and when it shrieked
Amid the flames, he sat and looked at it,
With fixèd eyeballs and a stony heart.
Unnatural mother! worse than idiotcy
To leave a baby in a madman's lap,
And yet no fetters, from infanticide
To save his murderous hands.

Woman (rushing away). O God! O God!

Astrologer. Come forward, thou with that most ghost-like face,
Fit for a winding-sheet! and if those lips
So blue and quivering still can utter sounds,
What wouldst thou say? The motions of thine eyes
Betoken some wild wish within thy heart.
(*A Man comes forward, and lays down money before the Astrologer.*)

Man. I trust my hour is near. I am alone
In this dark world, and I desire to die.

Astrologer. Thou shalt be kept alive by misery.
A tree doth live, long after rottenness
Hath eat away its heart: the sap of life
Moves through its withered rind, and it lives on;
'Mid the green woods a rueful spectacle
Of mockery and decay.

Man. I feel 'tis so.
Thus have I been since first the Plague burst out,
A term methinks of many hundred years!
As if this world were hell, and I condemned
To walk through woe to all eternity.
I will do suicide.

Astrologer. Thou canst not, fool!
Thou lovest life with all its agonies:
Buy poison, and 'twill lie for years untouched
Beneath thy pillow, when thy midnight horrors
Are at their worst. Coward! thou canst not die!

Man. He sees my soul; a blast as if from hell
Drives me back from the grave—I dare not die.
[*He disappears among the crowd.*

(*A young and beautiful Lady approaches the Astrologer.*)

Lady. O man of fate! my lovely babes are dead!
My sweet twin-babes! and at the very hour
Thy voice predicted, did my infants die.
My husband saw them both die in my arms,
And never shed a tear. Yet did he love them
Even as the wretch who bore them in her womb.
He will not speak to me, but ever sits
In horrid silence, with his glazèd eyes
Full on my face, as if he loved me not—
O God! as if he hated me! I lean
My head upon his knees and say my prayers,
But no kind word, or look, or touch is mine.
Then will he rise and pace through all the rooms,
Like to a troubled ghost, or pale-faced man
Walking in his sleep. O tell me! hath the Plague
E'er these wild symptoms? Must my husband perish
Without the sense of his immortal soul?
Or,—bless me for ever with the heavenly words,—
Say he will yet recover, and behold
His loving wife with answering looks of love.

Astrologer. Where are the gold, the diamonds, and the pearls,
That erewhile, in thy days of vanity,
Did sparkle, star-like, through the hanging clouds
That shaded thy bright neck, that raven hair?
Give them to me; for many are the poor,
Nor shalt thou, Lady! ever need again
This mortal being's frivolous ornaments.
Give me the gold you promised; holiest alms
Add not a moment to our numbered days,
But the death of open-handed charity
Is on a bed of down. Hast thou the gold?

Lady. All that I have is here. My husband gave me
This simple necklace on my marriage-day.
Take it! Here is a picture set in gold.
The picture I may keep. O! that his face
Were smiling so serenely beautiful,
So like an angel's now!—O sacred ring!
Which I did hope to wear within the tomb,
I give thee to the poor. So may their prayers
Save him from death for whose delightful sake
With bliss I wore it, and with hope resign.
Here, take them all, thou steward of the poor;

Stern as thou art, thou art a holy man!
I do believe thou art a holy man.
Astrologer. Lady, thou need'st this wedding-ring no more!
Death with his lean and bony hand hath loosened
The bauble from thy finger, and even now
Thy husband is a corpse. O! might I say
Thy beauty were immortal! But a ghost,
In all the loveliness on earth it wore,
Walks through the moonlight of the cemetery,
And I know the shadow of the mortal creature
Now weeping at my side.

(*Enter* FRANKFORT *and* WILMOT *close to the Astrologer.*)

Frank. Amelia!
Lady. Ah me! whose soft kind voice is that I hear?
Frank. Frankfort! the playmate of thy infancy,
The brother of thy womanhood, the friend
Of thy dear husband, and the godfather
Of thy sweet twins, heaven shield their innocence!
Lady. My babes are with their Saviour, and my husband
Has gone with them to heaven. Lead, lead me hence
For the seer's stern and scowling countenance
Is more than I can bear.
Frank. O grief! to think
That one so dear to heaven, by Christ beloved
For a still life of perfect sinlessness,
Should, in such sad delusion, court the ban
Of this most savage liar, sporting thus
With the broken spirit of humanity.
Astrologer. Welcome to London, storm-beat mariners!
The city is in masquerade to-day,
And, in good truth, the Plague doth celebrate
A daily festival, with many a dance
Fantastic, and unusual melody,
That may not suit your ears, accustomed long
To the glad sea-breeze, and the rousing airs
Of martial music on your armèd decks.
Frank. (*to Wil.*) Is this some wild enthusiast, whom the times
Have sent unto the light, deluding others
By his own strong delusions, or some fiend,
Thirsting for gold even in the very grave?
Wil. With what a cruel face he looks at us!

Frank. If an impostor in the shadow of death
Endangering thus thy soul, vile wretch! come down
From thy tribunal built upon the fears
Of agony, lest in thy seat of guile
The Pest may smite thee! Lean on me, Amelia!
Astrologer. Scoff not at God's own delegate, Harry Frankfort!
What though the burning fever of the west
Hath spared thy bronzèd face and stately form?
A mightier Power is here; and he may smile,
Ere the sun go down, upon thy bloated corpse.
Not thus the maiden whom her sailor loves
Despised me and my prophecies. Magdalene,
In snow-white raiment, like a maid that walked
At the funeral of a maiden, she stood there,
Even on the very stones beneath your feet,
And asked of me her doom; but on this earth
Thy Magdalene's beauty must be seen no more.
Frank. (*to Wil.*) The maid of whom he speaks lives far remote.
In her father's cottage, near a silent lake
Among the hills of Westmoreland, she breathes,
Happy and well, her own sweet mountain air.
Methinks I know his face. That hardened eye
Gleams through the dimness of my memory,
I know not when nor where. Amelia, come,
And I will lead thee home. I hear the crowd
Saying that thy husband is alive: may heaven
For many a year preserve you to each other.
Say, is my mother living?
Lady. God forgive me,
As I hope for my friend's forgiveness!
I know not if she lives; for, oh! this Plague
Hath spread an universal selfishness,
And each house in its own calamity
Stands single, shut from human fellowship
By sullen misery and heart-withering fear.
Voice from the crowd. Look at the sorcerer! how his countenance
Is fallen!—'tis distorted horribly!
A shadow comes across it, like a squall
Darkening the sea.
Another voice. Even thus I saw a man
This very morning stricken by the Plague,
And in three hours he was a ghost. Disperse,

All ye who prize your lives! soon will the air
Be foul with his dead body. Let us away!
[*The crowd disperse.*
Astrologer. God's hand is on me. In my cruel guilt
I perish. Frankfort, I have never seen
Magdalene, the maid thou lovest. Look at me;
Dost not remember Francis Bannerman
On board the Thunderer?
Frank. Pardon to thy soul!
Thou mad abuser of the gifts of heaven.
Astrologer. Oh! I am sick to death: my soul hath sunk
At once into despair.
Wil. What dreadful groans!—
O fatal is the blast of misery,
When it hath forced its way into the soul
Of hardened cruelty! As when a storm
Hath burst the gates of a thick-ribbèd hold,
And all its gloomy dungeons, in one moment,
Are roaring like a hundred cataracts.
Astrologer. I have shed blood. Roll, roll, ye mountain waves,
Above that merciless ghost that walks the sea
After our ship for ever! Shut thine eyes,
Those glaring, bloodshot, those avenging eyes,
And I will bear to feel thy skeleton-arms
Twined round my heart, so that those eyes be shut!
A ghost's wild eyes, that nothing can behold
But the frightened aspect of its murderer!
Unconscious they of ocean, air, and Heaven,
But fixed eternally, like hideous stars,
On a shrieking soul whom guilt hath doomed to Hell!
Frank (to Wil.) The murderer is raving of his crime.
Astrologer. Ha! ha! 'tis set within the ebb of flood
Fifty feet high; and the ironed criminal
With a frantic face stands dumb upon the scaffold.
The priest is singing psalms!—Curst be the eyes
That see such idle show—'tis all gone by!
I fear not Hell, if that eternal Shape
Meet me not there! Pray, pray not for me, Frankfort,
For I am delivered over to despair,
And holy words are nought but mockery
To him who knows that he must dwell for ever
In regions darkened by the wrath of God.
Lady. Let us leave this horrid scene!

Astrologer. O might I hear
That sweet voice breathing of forgiveness!
Hush! hush! a voice once breathed upon this earth
That would have pleaded not in vain to Heaven,
Even for a fiend like me. Thou art in Heaven,
And knowest all thy husband's wickedness;
So hide thy pitying eyes, and let me sink
Without thy intercession to the depths
Of unimagined woe!—O Christ! I die.

Frank. Most miserable end! an evil man
Prostrating by a savage eloquence
The spirits of the wretched—so that he
Might riot on the bare necessities
Of man's expiring nature—on the spoil
Of the unburied dead! Most atheist-like!
I know not how I can implore the grace
Of God unto thy soul!

Astrologer. Eternal doom!
The realms of Hell are gleaming fiery bright.
What ghastly faces!—Christ, have mercy on me!

Lady. Wilt thou not lead me away, for I am blind!
O Frankfort, come with me—the Plague hath struck
My husband into madness—and I fear him!
O God! I fear the man whom I do love!

Frank. All—all are wretched—guilty—dead or dying;
And all the wild and direful images
That crowd, and wail, and blacken round my soul,
Have reconciled me to the misery
Sent from my mother's grave. An hour of respite
Is granted me while I conduct thee home:
Then will I seek that grave, and, 'mid the tumult
Of this perturbèd city, sit and listen
To a voice that in my noiseless memory
Sings like an angel.

Lady. She is yet alive!

Frank. Thy voice is like the voice of Hope—Sweet friend,
Be cheered, nor tremble so—for God is with us.

SCENE III.

A Churchyard. Two Females in mourning dresses sitting on a Tombstone.

1*st Lady.* The door of the Cathedral is left open.
Perhaps some one within is at the altar
Offering up thanks, or supplicating heaven
To save a husband dying of the Plague.
If so, I join a widow's prayer to hers,
Sitting on my husband's grave.
2*d Lady.* One moment hush!
Methought I heard a footstep in the church,
As of one walking softly up the chancel.
List—list! I am not dreaming of a strain
Of heavenly music? 'Tis a hymn of praise.
[*A voice is heard singing in the Cathedral.*
1*st Lady.* A voice so heavenly sweet I once did hear
Singing at night close to my bed, when I
Was beyond hope recovering from the Plague.
That voice hymned in my sleep, and was a dream
Framed by my soul returning into life,
A strain that murmured from another world.
But this is earthly music: she must have
An angel's face who through the echoing aisle
So like an angel sings.
2*d Lady.* I know that voice!
Last Sabbath evening, sitting on this stone,
And thinking who it was that lay below it,
I heard that very music faint and far,
Deadened almost into silence by the weight
Of those thick walls. I listened with my heart
That I might hear the dirge-like air again.
But it did rise no more, and I believed
Twas some sweet fancy of my sorrowful soul,
Or wandering breath of evening through the pillars
Of the Cathedral sighing wildly by.
1*st Lady.* And sawest thou no one?
2*d Lady.* Yes; I gently stole
Into the solemn twilight of the church,
And looking towards the altar, there I saw
A white-robed Being on her knees. At first
I felt such awe as I had seen a spirit,

When, rising from the attitude of prayer,
The vision softly glided down the steps,
And then her eyes met mine. But such sweet eyes,
So filled with human sadness, yet so bright
Even through their tears with a celestial joy,
Ne'er shone before on earth. Even such methought
The Virgin-Mother's holy countenance,
When, turning from her Son upon the cross,
A gleam of heavenly comfort cheered the darkness
Of her disconsolate soul? At once I knew
That I was looking on the Maid divine
Whom the sad city blessed—whose form arises
Beside the bed of death by all deserted,
And to the dim eyes of the dying man
Appears an angel sent from pitying heaven
To bid him part in peace. I could have dropt
Down on my knees and worshipped her, but silent
As a gleam of light the creature glided by me,
And ere my soul recovered she was gone.

1*st Lady.* How weak and low does virtue such as hers
Make us poor beings feel!

2*d Lady.* Yet she is one
Of frail and erring mortals, and she knew not
In other days, to what a lofty pitch
Her gentle soul could soar. For I have heard
She was an only child, and in the light
Of her fond parents' love was fosterèd,
Like a flower that blooms best sheltered in the house,
And only placed beneath the open air
In hours of sunshine.

1*st Lady.* Could we now behold
The glorious Being?

2*d Lady.* No; this hour is sacred:
We must not interrupt her. The dew falls
Heavy and chill, and thou art scarce recovered
From that long sickness—Let me kiss thee thus,
Thou cold wet stone,—thou loveliest, saddest name,
Ever engraven on a monument.

(*The scene changes to the interior of the Cathedral,* MAGDALENE *discovered on her knees at the altar.*)

Magdalene. Father of mercies! may I lift mine eyes
From the holy ground that I have wet with tears,
Unto the silence of the moonlight heavens
That shine above me with a smile of love,
Forgiveness, and compassion? There Thou art!

Enthroned in glory and omnipotence!
Yet from thy dwelling 'mid the eternal stars,
Encircled by the hymning seraphim,
Thou dost look down upon our mortal earth,
And seest this weeping creature on her knees,
And hear'st the beatings of her lonely heart.
If, in my days of sinless infancy,
My innocence found favour in thy sight;
If in my youth,—and yet I am but young,—
I strove to walk according to thy will,
And reverenced my Bible, and did weep,
Thinking of him who died upon the cross;
If, in their old age, I did strive to make
My parents happy, and received at last
Their benediction on the bed of death—
Oh! let me walk the waves of this wild world
Through faith unsinking;—stretch thy saving hand
To a lone castaway upon the sea,
Who hopes no resting-place except in heaven.
And oh! this holy calm,—this peace profound,—
That sky so glorious in infinitude,—
That countless host of softly-burning stars,
And all that floating universe of light,
Lift up my spirit far above the grave,
And tell me that my pray'rs are heard in Heaven.
I feel th' Omnipotent is Merciful!

(*A voice exclaims from an unseen person.*)

O were my name remembered in thy prayers!

Magd. (*rising from her knees*). Did some one speak?

Voice. A sinful wretch implores
That thou wilt stand between him and the wrath
Of an offended God.

Magd. Come to the altar.

(*A man advances from behind a pillar, and kneels down at the altar.*)

Stranger. I fear I cannot pray. My wicked heart,
Long unaccustomed to these bended knees,
Feels not the worship that my limbs would offer;
—My lot is cast in hell.

Magd. Repentance finds
The blackest gulf in the wild soul of sin,
And calms the tumult there, even as our Lord
With holy hand did hush the howling sea.

Stranger. Lady! I am too near thy blessed side;

The breath of such a saint ought not to fall
Into the hard heart of a murderer.
Magd. Hast thou come here to murder me?
Stranger. Behold
This dagger.
Magd. Then the will of God be done!
Stranger. Rather than hurt one of those loveliest hairs
That, braided round thy pale, thy fearless brow,
Do make thee seem an Angel or a Spirit
At night come down from heaven, would I for ever
Live in the dark corruption of the grave.
Magd. My heart is beating—but I fear thee not—
Thou wilt not murder me?
Stranger. What need'st thou fear?
Kneeling in those white robes, so like a Spirit,
With face too beautiful for tears to stain,
Eyes meekly raised to heaven, and snow-white hands
Devoutly folded o'er a breast that moves
In silent adoration——what hast thou
To fear from man or fiend? O rise not up!
So Angel-like thou seem'st upon thy knees,
Even I can hope while thou art at thy prayers.
Magd. If thou cam'st hither to unload thy soul,
Kneel down.
Stranger. I hither came to murder thee.
With silent foot I traced thee to this church,
And there, beyond that pillar, took my stand,
That I might rush upon thee at the altar,
And kill thee at thy prayers. I grasped the knife—
When suddenly thy melancholy voice
Began that low wild hymn!—I could not move;
The holy music made thee seem immortal!
And when I dared to look towards thy face,
The moonlight fell upon it, and I saw
A smile of such majestic innocence,
That long-lost pity to my soul returned,
And I knelt down and wept.
Magd. What made thee think
Of killing one who never injured thee?
Stranger. Th' accursed love of gold.
Magd. Hath Poverty
Blinded thy soul, and driven thee forth a prey
To Sin, who loves the gaunt and hollow cheeks
Of miserable men? Perhaps a cell
Holds thy sick wife——

Stranger. No! I have sold my soul
Unto the Evil One, nor even canst Thou,
With all the music of that heavenly voice,
Charm the stern ear of hell.
Magd. Alas! poor wretch!
What shakes thee so?
Stranger. 'Mid all the ghastly shrieking,
Black sullen dumbness, and wild-staring frenzy,
Pain madly leaping out of life, or fettered
By burning irons to its house of clay,
Where think you Satan drove me? To the haunts
Of riot, lust, and reckless blasphemy.
In spite of that eternal passing-bell,
And all the ghosts that hourly flocked in troops
Unto the satiated grave, insane
With drunken guilt, I mocked my Saviour's name
With hideous mummery, and the holy book
In scornful fury trampled, rent, and burned.
Oh! ours were dreadful orgies!—At still midnight
We sallied out in mimic grave-clothes clad,
Aping the dead, and in some churchyard danced
A dance that ofttimes had a mortal close.
Then would we lay a living Body out,
As it had been a corpse, and bear it slowly
With what at distance seemed a holy dirge,
Through silent streets and squares unto its rest.
One quaintly apparelled like a surpliced priest
Led the procession, joining in the song;—
A jestful song, most brutal and obscene,
Shameful to man, his Saviour, and his God.
Or in a hearse we sat, which one did drive
In masquerade habiliments of death;
And in that ghastly chariot whirl'd along,
With oaths, and songs, and shouts, and peals of laughter,
Till sometimes that most devilish merriment
Chilled our own souls with horror, and we stared
Upon each other all at once struck dumb.
Magd. Madness! 'twas madness all.
Stranger. Oh! that it were!
But, lady! were we mad when we partook
Of what we called a sacrament?
Magd. Hush! hush!—
Stranger. Yes—I will utter it—we brake the bread,
And wine poured out, and jesting, ate and drank
Perdition to our souls.

Magd. And women too,
Did they blaspheme their Saviour?
Stranger. Ay! there sat
Round that unhallowed table beautiful creatures,
Who seemed to feel a fiend-like happiness
In tempting us wild wretches to blaspheme.
Sweet voices had they, though of broken tones;
Their faces fair, though waxing suddenly
Whiter than ashes; smiles were in their eyes,
Though often in their mirth they upwards looked,
And wept; nor, when they tore distractedly
The garments from their bosoms, could our souls
Sustain the beauty heaving in our sight
With grief, remorse, despair, and agony.
We knew that we were lost, yet would we pluck
The flowers that bloomed upon the crater's edge,
Nor feared the yawning gulf.
Magd. Why art thou here?
Stranger. Riot hath made us miserably poor,
And gold we needs must have. I heard a whisper
Tempting me to murder, and thy very name
Distinctly syllabled. In vain I strove
Against the Tempter—bent was I on blood!
But here I stand in hopeless penitence,
Nor even implore thy prayers—my doom is sealed.
[*He flings himself down before the altar,*
Magd. Poor wretch, I leave thee to the grace of God.—
Ah me! how calmly and serenely smile
Those pictured saints upon the holy wall,
Tinged by that sudden moonlight! That meek face,
How like my mother's! So she wore her veil;
Even so her braided hair!—Ye blessed spirits,
Look down upon your daughter in her trouble,
For I am sick at heart. The moonlight dies—
I feel afraid of darkness. Wretched man,
Hast thou found comfort? Groans his sole reply.—
I must away to that sad Funeral.

SCENE IV.

The Street.--A long Table covered with Glasses.—A Party of young Men and Women carousing.

Young Man. I rise to give, most noble President,
The memory of a man well known to all,
Who by keen jest, and merry anecdote,
Sharp repartee, and humorous remark
Most biting in its solemn gravity,
Much cheered our out-door table, and dispelled
The fogs which this rude visitor the Plague
Oft breathed across the brightest intellect.
But two days past, our ready laughter chased
His various stories ; and it cannot be
That we have in our gamesome revelries
Forgotten Harry Wentworth. His chair stands
Empty at your right hand—as if expecting
That jovial wassailer—but he is gone
Into cold narrow quarters. Well, I deem
The grave did never silence with its dust
A tongue more eloquent ; but since 'tis so,
And store of boon companions yet survive,
There is no reason to be sorrowful ;
Therefore let us drink unto his memory
With acclamation, and a merry peal
Such as in life he loved.

Master of Revels. 'Tis the first death
Hath been amongst us, therefore let us drink
His memory in silence.

Young Man. Be it so.

[*They all rise, and drink their glasses in silence.*

Master of Revels. Sweet Mary Gray ! Thou hast a silver voice,
And wildly to thy native melodies
Can tune its flute-like breath—sing us a song,
And let it be, even mid our merriment,
Most sad, most slow, that when its music dies,
We may address ourselves to revelry,
More passionate from the calm, as men leap up
To this world's business from some heavenly dream.

MARY GRAY'S SONG.

I walk'd by mysel ower the sweet braes o' Yarrow,
When the earth wi' the gowans o' July was drest;
But the sang o' the bonny burn sounded like sorrow,
Round ilka house cauld as a last simmer's nest.

I look'd through the lift o' the blue smiling morning,
But never ae wee cloud o' mist could I see
On its way up to heaven, the cottage adorning,
Hanging white ower the green o' its sheltering tree.

By the outside I kenn'd that the inn was forsaken,
That nae tread o' footsteps was heard on the floor;—
O loud craw'd the cock whare was nane to awaken,
And the wild raven croak'd on the seat by the door!

Sic silence—sic lonesomeness, oh, were bewildering!
I heard nae lass singing when herding her sheep;
I met nae bright garlands o' wee rosy children
Dancing on to the school-house just waken'd frae sleep.

I pass'd by the school-house—when strangers were coming,
Whose windows with glad faces seem'd all alive;
Ae moment I hearken'd, but heard nae sweet humming,
For a night o' dark vapour can silence the hive.

I pass'd by the pool where the lasses at dawing
Used to bleach their white garments wi' daffin and din;
But the foam in the silence o' nature was faing,
And nae laughing rose loud through the roar of the linn.

I gaed into a small town—when sick o' my roaming—
Whare ance play'd the viol, the tabor, and flute;
'Twas the hour loved by Labour, the saft-smiling gloaming,
Yet the green round the Cross-stane was empty and mute.

To the yellow-flower'd meadow, and scant rigs o' tillage,
The sheep a' neglected had come frae the glen;
The cushat-dow coo'd in the midst o' the village,
And the swallow had flown to the dwellings o' men!

Sweet Denholm! not thus, when I lived in thy bosom.
Thy heart lay so still the last night o' the week;
Then nane was sae weary that love would nae rouse him,
And Grief gaed to dance with a laugh on his cheek.

Sic thoughts wet my een—as the moonshine was beaming
On the kirk-tower that rose up sae silent and white;
The wan ghastly light on the dial was streaming,
But the still finger tauld not the hour of the night.

The mirk-time pass'd slowly in siching and weeping,
I waken'd, and nature lay silent in mirth;
Ower a' holy Scotland the Sabbath was sleeping,
And Heaven in beauty came down on the earth.

The morning smiled on—but nae kirk-bell was ringing,
Nae plaid or blue bonnet came down frae the hill;
The kirk-door was shut, but nae psalm-tune was singing,
And I miss'd the wee voices sae sweet and sae shrill.

I look'd ower the quiet o' Death's empty dwelling,
The lav'rock walk'd mute 'mid the sorrowful scene,
And fifty brown hillocks wi' fresh mould were swelling
Ower the kirk-yard o' Denholm, last simmer sae green.

The infant had died at the breast o' its mither;
The cradle stood still at the mitherless bed;
At play the bairn sank in the hand o' its brither;
At the fauld on the mountain the shepherd lay dead.

Oh! in spring-time 'tis eerie, when winter is over,
And birds should be glinting ower forest and lea,
When the lint-white and mavis the yellow leaves cover,
And nae blackbird sings loud frae the tap o' his tree.

But eerier far, when the spring-land rejoices,
And laughs back to heaven with gratitude bright,
To hearken! and naewhere hear sweet human voices!
When man's soul is dark in the season o' light!

Master of Revels. We thank thee, sweet one! for thy mournful song.
It seems, in the olden time, this very Plague
Visited thy hills and valleys, and the voice
Of lamentation wailed along the streams
That now flow on through their wild paradise,
Murmuring their songs of joy. All that survive
In memory of that melancholy year,
When died so many brave and beautiful,
Are some sweet mournful airs, some shepherd's lay
Most touching in simplicity, and none
Fitter to make one sad amid his mirth
Than the tune yet faintly singing through our souls.
Mary Gray. O! that I ne'er had sung it but at home
Unto my aged parents! to whose ear
Their Mary's tones were always musical.
I hear my own self singing o'er the moor,
Beside my native cottage,—most unlike
The voice which Edward Walsingham has praised,
It is the angel-voice of innocence.

2d Woman. I thought this cant were out of fashion now.
But it is well; there are some simple souls,
Even yet, who melt at a frail maiden's tears,
And give her credit for sincerity.
She thinks her eyes quite killing while she weeps.
Thought she as well of smiles, her lips would pout
With a perpetual simper. Walsingham
Hath praised these crying beauties of the north,
So whimpering is the fashion. How I hate
The dim dull yellow of that Scottish hair!

Master of Revels. Hush! hush!—is that the sound of wheels I hear?

[*The Dead-cart passes by, driven by a Negro.*

Ha! dost thou faint, Louisa! one had thought
That railing tongue bespoke a mannish heart.
But so it ever is. The violent
Are weaker than the mild, and abject fear
Dwells in the heart of passion. Mary Gray,
Throw water on her face. She now revives.

Mary Gray. O sister of my sorrow and my shame!
Lean on my bosom. Sick must be your heart
After a fainting-fit so like to death.

Louisa (*recovering*). I saw a horrid demon in my dream!
With sable visage and white-glaring eyes,
He beckoned on me to ascend a cart
Filled with dead bodies, muttering all the while
An unknown language of most dreadful sounds.
What matters it? I see it was a dream.
—Pray, did the dead-cart pass?

Young Man. Come, brighten up,
Louisa! Though this street be all our own,
A silent street that we from death have rented,
Where we may hold our orgies undisturbed,
You know those rumbling wheels are privileged,
And we must bide the nuisance. Walsingham,
To put an end to bickering, and these fits
Of fainting that proceed from female vapours,
Give us a song;—a free and gladsome song;
None of those Scottish ditties framed of sighs,
But a true English Bacchanalian song,
By toper chanted o'er the flowing bowl.

Master of Revels. I have none such; but I will sing a song
Upon the Plague. I made the words last night,
After we parted: a strange rhyming-fit
Fell on me; 'twas the first time in my life.

But you shall have it, though my vile cracked voice
Won't mend the matter much.
Many Voices. A song on the Plague!
A song on the Plague! Let's have it! bravo! bravo!

SONG.

Two navies meet upon the waves
That round them yawn like opening graves;
The battle rages; seamen fall,
And overboard go one and all!
The wounded with the dead are gone;
But Ocean drowns each frantic groan,
And, at each plunge into the flood,
Grimly the billow laughs with blood.
—Then, what although our Plague destroy
Seaman and landman, woman, boy?
When the pillow rests beneath the head,
Like sleep he comes, and strikes us dead.
What though into yon Pit we go,
Descending fast, as flakes of snow?
What matters body without breath?
No groan disturbs that hold of death.

CHORUS.

Then, leaning on this snow-white breast,
I sing the praises of the Pest!
If me thou wouldst this night destroy,
Come, smite me in the arms of Joy.

Two armies meet upon the hill;
They part, and all again is still.
No! thrice ten thousand men are lying,
Of cold, and thirst, and hunger dying.
While the wounded soldier rests his head
About to die upon the dead,
What shrieks salute yon dawning light?
'Tis Fire that comes to aid the Fight!
—All whom our Plague destroys by day,
His chariot drives by night away;
And sometimes o'er a churchyard wall
His banner hangs, a sable pall!
Where in the light by Hecate shed
With grisly smile he counts the dead,
And piles them up a trophy high
In honour of his victory.
Then, leaning, &c.

King of the aisle! and churchyard cell!
Thy regal robes become thee well.
With yellow spots, like lurid stars
Prophetic of throne-shattering wars,

Bespangled is its night-like gloom,
As it sweeps the cold damp from the tomb.
Thy hand doth grasp no needless dart,
One finger-touch benumbs the heart.
If thy stubborn victim will not die,
Thou roll'st around thy bloodshot eye,
And Madness leaping in his chain
With giant buffet smites the brain,
Or Idiocy with drivelling laugh
Holds out her strong-drugged bowl to quaff,
And down the drunken wretch doth lie
Unsheeted in the cemetery.
Then, leaning, &c.

Thou! Spirit of the burning breath,
Alone deservest the name of Death!
Hide, Fever! hide thy scarlet brow;
Nine days thou linger'st o'er thy blow,
Till the leech bring water from the spring,
And scare thee off on drenched wing.
Consumption! waste away at will!
In warmer climes thou fail'st to kill,
And rosy Health is laughing loud
As off thou steal'st with empty shroud!
Ha! blundering Palsy! thou art chill!
But half the man is living still;
One arm, one leg, one cheek, one side
In antic guise thy wrath deride.
But who may 'gainst thy power rebel.
King of the aisle and churchyard cell!
Then, leaning, &c.

To Thee, O Plague! I pour my song,
Since thou art come I wish thee long!
Thou strikest the lawyer 'mid his lies,
The priest 'mid his hypocrisies.
The miser sickens at his hoard,
And the gold leaps to its rightful lord.
The husband, now no longer tied,
May wed a new and blushing bride,
And many a widow slyly weeps
O'er the grave where her old dotard sleeps,
While love shines through her moisten'd eye
On yon tall stripling gliding by.
'Tis ours who bloom in vernal years
To dry the love-sick maiden's tears,
Who, turning from the relics cold,
In a new swain forgets the old.
Then, leaning, &c.

(*Enter an old grey-headed Priest.*)

Priest. O impious table! spread by impious hands!
Mocking with feast and song and revelry

The silent air of death that hangs above it,
A canopy more dismal than the Pall!
Amid the churchyard darkness as I stood
Beside a dire interment, circled round
By the white ghastly faces of despair,
That hideous merriment disturbed the grave,
And with a sacrilegious violence
Shook down the crumbling earth upon the bodies
Of the unsheeted dead. But that the prayers
Of holy age and female piety
Did sanctify that wide and common grave,
I could have thought that hell's exulting fiends
With shouts of devilish laughter dragged away
Some hardened atheist's soul unto perdition.

Several Voices. How well he talks of hell! Go on, old boy!
The devil pays his tithes—yet he abuses him.

Priest. Cease, I conjure you, by the blessed blood
Of Him who died for us upon the Cross,
These most unnatural orgies. As ye hope
To meet in heaven the souls of them ye loved,
Destroyed so mournfully before your eyes,
Unto your homes depart.

Master of Revels. Our homes are dull—
And youth loves mirth.

Priest. O, Edward Walsingham!
Art thou that groaning pale-faced man of tears
Who three weeks since knelt by thy mother's corpse,
And kissed the soldered coffin, and leapt down
With rage-like grief into the burial vault,
Crying upon its stone to cover thee
From this dim darkened world? Would she not weep,
Weep even in heaven, could she behold her son
Presiding o'er unholy revellers,
And tuning that sweet voice to frantic songs
That should ascend unto the throne of grace
'Mid sob-broken words of prayer!

Young Man. Why! we can pray
Without a priest—pray long and fervently
Over the brimming bowl. Hand him a glass.

Master of Revels. Treat his grey hairs with reverence.

Priest. Wretched boy!
This white head must not sue to thee in vain!
Come with the guardian of thy infancy,
And by the hymns and psalms of holy men
Lamenting for their sins, we will assuage

This fearful mirth akin to agony,
And in its stead, serene as the hushed face
Of thy dear sainted parent, kindle hope
And heavenly resignation. Come with me.
Young Man. They have a design against the hundredth Psalm.
Oh! Walsingham will murder cruelly
"All people that on earth do dwell."
Suppose we sing it here—I know the drawl.
Master of Revels (silencing him, and addressing the Priest).
Why camest thou hither to disturb me thus?
I may not, must not go! Here am I held
By hopelessness in dark futurity,
By dire remembrance of the past,—by hatred
And deep contempt of my own worthless self,—
By fear and horror of the lifelessness
That reigns throughout my dwelling,—by the new
And frantic love of loud-tongued revelry,—
By the blest poison mantling in this bowl,—
And, help me Heaven! by the soft balmy kisses
Of this lost creature, lost, but beautiful
Even in her sin; nor could my mother's ghost
Frighten me from this fair bosom. 'Tis too late!
I hear thy warning voice—I know it strives
To save me from perdition, body and soul.
Belovèd old man, go thy way in peace,
But curst be these feet if they do follow thee.
Several Voices. Bravo! bravissimo! Our noble president!
Done with that sermonising—off—off—off!
Priest. Matilda's sainted spirit calls on thee!
Master of Revels (starting distractedly from his seat).
Didst thou not swear, with thy pale withered hands
Lifted to Heaven, to let that doleful name
Lie silent in the tomb for evermore?
O that a wall of darkness hid this sight
From her immortal eyes! She, my betrothed,
Once thought my spirit lofty, pure, and free,
And on my bosom felt herself in Heaven.
What am I now? (*looking up*)—O holy child of light,
I see thee sitting where my fallen nature
Can never hope to soar!
Female Voice. The fit is on him.
Fool! thus to rave about a buried wife!
See! how his eyes are fixed.

Master of Revels. Most glorious star!
Thou art the spirit of that bright Innocent!
And there thou shinest with upbraiding beauty
On him whose soul hath thrown at last away
Not the hope only, but the wish of Heaven.

Priest. Come, Walsingham!

Master of Revels. O holy father! go.
For mercy's sake, leave me to my despair.

Priest. Heaven pity my dear son. Farewell! farewell!

[*The Priest walks mournfully away.*

Young Man. Sing him another song. See how he turns
His eyes from yon far Heaven to Mary's bosom?
The man's in love. Ho! Walsingham! what cheer?

Master of Revels (*angrily*). I hate that Irish slang—it grates my soul.

Mary Gray. O Walsingham: I fear to touch the breast
Where one so pure has lain! Yet turn thine eyes
Towards me, a sinful creature, that thy soul
May lose the sight of that celestial phantom,
Whose beauty is a torment. List to me.

Master of Revels. Here, Mary! with a calm deliberate soul
I swear to love thee; with such love, sweet girl!
As a man sunk in utter wretchedness
May cherish for a daughter of despair.
O maudlin fools! who preach of Chastity,
And call her Queen of Virtues! In the breast
Even of this prostitute, (why should I fear
That word of three unmeaning syllables?)
In spite of all that's whispered from the grave,
I now will seek, and seeking I will find
The open-eyed sleep of troubled happiness.

Mary Gray. All names are one to me. I often love
The imprecations of brutality,
Because, with vain contrition for my sins,
I feel that I deserve them all. But thou
Killest me with thy pitying gentleness,
Wasting sweet looks, and words of amity,
On a polluted creature drenched in shame.

Young Man. Had yon old dotard, with his surplice on,
Emblem of his pretended sanctity,
And sanctimonious visage common to all
The hypocritic brotherhood of priests,
Staid but a little longer, I had read him
A lecture on the Christian's outward creed.

This is rare season for the jugglery
Of these church-mountebanks!
Master of Revels. Fool! hold thy peace!
Thou in thy heart hast said there is no God,
Yet knowest thyself—a liar.
Young Man (starting up furiously). On his knees,
Upon his knees must Edward Walsingham
Implore forgiveness for these villainous words,
Or through his heart this sword will find a passage,
Even swifter than the Plague.
Master of Revels. Upon my knees!
Fierce gladiator! dost thou think to daunt me
By that red rapier reeking with the blood
Of nerveless, hot-brained, inexperienced boys,
Whom thou hast murdered? Stand upon thy guard,
And see if all the skill of fencing France,
Or thy Italian practice, cowardly bravo!
Can ward this flash of lightning from thine eyes.

Enter FRANKFORT *and* WILMOT, *who rush between them.*

Frank. Madmen! put up your swords. What, Walsingham
The Captain of the Ocean Queen, engaged
In brawls on shore.
Master of Revels. Ay! 'tis a foolish quarrel,
And may have foolish ending: But he spake
With rude licentious tongue irreverently
Of a white head that since my mother's death
Hath been to me the holiest thing on earth;
And woe to its blasphemer!
Young Man whispers. St Martin's Fields,
At twelve o'clock. There is good moonlight for us.
Master of Revels. 'Tis a right hour. I'll meet thee at
the elm-tree
Named from the royal deer. At twelve o'clock!
[*The party breaks up.*
What news from sea?
Frank. All well.
Master of Revels. Why look so pale?
Before an action fearless men look pale,
And fling away their smiles; but once engaged,
They scoff at death with gleesome mockery.
No deck was e'er so strewed with hideous slaughter,
As the wide floor of this Plague-conquered city,
Therefore look up—our colours still are flying—
Will Frankfort strike them?

Frank. Yes! I am a coward!
I have for hours been wandering through this city,
And now I stand within a little furlong
Of the house that was my mother's. I have lingered
In places quite remote—have traversed streets
That led not thither—yea! I have turned my face
Away from the imaged dwelling of my parent,
Glad to put off the moment that might tell me
That which with agony I long to know.
Besides, mayhap, I am intruding here.
Good evening, Walsingham—to you, fair dames,
Farewell.—Come, Wilmot, o'er yon roof I see
The vane upon the house-top, where——
Walsingham. Your mother
On Thursday was alive.
Frank. God bless thee, Walsingham!
On Thursday—and 'tis yet but Sabbath-night.
She must be living still! Said they that the Plague
Destroys so suddenly? In three small hours?
Three days and nights contain a frightful sum
Of fatal hours. The Plague doth ask but three—
She may be sick—dead—buried—and forgotten.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

The Street opposite a house adjoining Aldgate Churchyard.

Frank. Hush, Wilmot! while I say one little prayer.
There stands the house—I see it in my soul,
Though yet mine eyes dare not to look on it.
—Let me lean on thee—hear'st thou aught within?
Wil. It is the hour of rest: I nothing hear;
But the house, methinks, is slumbering happily
In the clear moonlight. 'Tis a lovely night,
Beauty without these walls, and peace within.
Frank. Wears it the look of a deserted dwelling?
Wil. Its silence seems of sleep and not of death.
Frank. O Wilmot! sure the moon shines ruefully,
On these black windows faintly tinged with light!

I see no difference between these dark walls,
And yonder tombstones—they both speak of death.
Wil. Be comforted.
Frank. List! Wilmot! hear'st thou aught?
Methinks it was my mother's voice within
Singing a dirge-like hymn. Hear'st thou a voice?
Wil. Grief mocks itself with fancied sounds like these;
There was no voice.
Frank. O let it breathe again,
And all the world will seem alive to me.
—O God! the silence of this lifeless street,
Where all the human dwellings stand like tombs
Empty or fill'd with corpses, seems collected
Round this one house, whose shadowy glimmering walls
Bear down my soul in utter hopelessness.
Oh! 'tis a sad, sad wreck. Mark how the dust
Lies on th' untrodden steps! and yet I see
Footprints of one ascending. As I live,
I hear a footstep in my mother's chamber
A light! a light! see where a light is moving
As from an apparition, through the house.
(*The door opens, and the Priest who appeared in the first Act comes into the Street.*)
Frank. Pale death is in his troubled countenance.
The house is falling from me, and the street
Is sinking down—down—down—I faint—Support me.
The Priest (*to* WIL. *while they support* FRANK).
At a sad hour the sailor hath returned.
Would he were yet at sea!
Frank. I hear thy voice,
And know that I indeed am motherless.
Priest. Blessèd are they who livèd in the Lord,
And in the Lord did die.
Frank. Amen—amen!
Hath little William gone with her to Heaven?
Priest. They died three hours apart. Methought I saw
The angelical mother smiling up the sky
With that delightful infant on her breast,
More like a spirit that had come from Heaven
To waft away the child to Paradise,
Than a human soul departing from this earth.
Frank. Soaring in beauty to immortal bliss
But away from him who held them in his heart,
An everlasting presence of delight
'Mid the dim dreary sea.

Priest. Weep, weep, my son,
I wish to see thee weep.
Frank. O, why should tear
Be shed unto the blest and beautiful
By us poor dwellers in the woeful shades
Of mortal being?
Wil. Thou art deadly pale!
Be not ashamed to weep upon my breast.
I have seen thee weeping for that sweet child's sake,
When haply he was dancing in his mirth—
Frank. Dancing in his mirth! The lovely child is dead.
All, all his innocent thoughts like rose-leaves scattered,
And his glad childhood nothing but a dream!
I feel his last kiss yet——(*weeping.*)
Wil. I also weep,
For I too am his brother, though his face
Was only visioned sweetly in my soul
With its small features——
Frank. Sudden happiness
Comes o'er my grief! Time and this world appear
Mere shadows, and I feel as if I stood
Close to my mother's side!—O mournful weakness!
The realms of Heaven are stretching far away;
My soul is fettered to the earth; the grave
Cries with a voice that may not be gainsaid,
And mortal life appears eternity,
Since she I loved has perished.
Priest. Some, my son,
Would bid thee trust in time, the friend of sorrow;
But thou hast nobler comforters; nor would I
Bid thee place hope in blind forgetfulness.
I know that there is taken from thy soul
Something that must return no more—a joy
That from the shore breathed on thee far at sea,
Filling thy heart with home; and sweeter far
Arose that feeling o'er the ocean calm,
Than airs balsamic breathing through the ship
From odorous island unseen 'mid the waves.
Frank. O kind old man! Thy sweet and solemn voice,
Fit organ for such peaceful images,
Breathes a calm reconcilement through my soul.
These silvery locks made white by time and sorrow,
Yet in their reverend beauty meekly smiling
At what hath made them so, most silently

Inspire my heart, although yet young in grief,
With resignation almost like thine own.
Priest. Son! hast thou strength to look upon that sight,
Where human loveliness seems perfected
By the last smile that will not pass away?
Frank. They yet then are unburied?
Priest. Even this day,
At the hour when yonder bell would have been tolling,
In other times than these, for morning-service,
Her spirit went to heaven—your brother died
Some little hours before.
Frank. And in that house
My mother and her little son lie dead!
—Yes! I have strength to look on them,—to kiss
Their cold white faces—to embrace their bodies,
Though soul be gone, still tenderly beloved,—
To gaze upon their eyelids, though the light
Must never break in beauty from below them,
And, with the words of fondest agony,
Softly to whisper love into the ear
That in its frozen silence hears me not.
Priest. I will conduct thee to them.
Frank. At the hour
When she was dying, in our vessel's barge
Was I approaching to the shore,—the oars
Sounded as they were muffled on the black
And sluggish water! 'Twas a gloomy hour,
Yet, dark as it was, I ne'er expected this.
One visit will I pay them ere I go.
Oh! I have many a heavy thought to utter
Which God alone must hear.
Priest. We will pray for thee,
Standing uncovered in this silent street.
And when we think thy soul is satisfied
With the awful converse holden with the dead,
We will come to thee for a little while,
And sit with thee beside their bodies. God
Will not forsake thee in this last distress.
Frank. I dare not enter, though I yearn to lie
For ever by their side. The very beauty
Which in their sleeping faces I shall see
With its fair image holds me motionless.
A gulf of darkness lies beyond that door!
—O tell me, reverend father! how they died,
And haply then I may have strength to go

And see them dead : Now 'tis impossible.
Wilmot ! why do you weep ?—be comforted.

Priest. Though from the awful suddenness of their death
The Plague hath surely stricken them, yet they lie,
Unlike the other victims of that pest,
In more than mortal beauty. Their still faces,
When last I saw them, in the moonlight lay,
Like innocence sleeping in the love of heaven,
Love mixed with pity. Though a smile was there,
It seemed a smile ne'er meant for human eye,
Nor seemed regarding me ; but there it shone
A mournful lustre, filling all the room
With the silence of its placid holiness.

Frank. Lovelier than when alive they might not be.
Tell how they died.

Priest. Last night I sat with her
And talked of thee ;—two tranquil hours we talked
Of thee and none beside, while little William
Sat in his sweet and timid silent way
Upon his stool beside his mother's knees,
And, sometimes looking upwards to her face,
Seemed listening of his brother far at sea.
This morning early I looked in upon them
Almost by chance. There little William lay
With his bright hair and rosy countenance
Dead ! though at first I thought he only slept.
"You think," his mother said, "that William sleeps !
But he is dead ! He sickened during the night,
And while I prayed he drew a long deep sigh,
And breathed no more !"

Frank. O sweet and sinless child !
Go on—go on !

Priest. I looked on her who spake,
And I saw something in her tearless eyes
More than a mother's grief—the cold dull gleam
Of mortal sickness hastening to decay.
She asked me not to leave her, and I staid
Till human help or comfort by that saint
No more was needed. But a gentler death
A Christian never died. Methought her soul
Faded in light, even as a glorious star
Is hidden 'mid the splendours of the morn.

Frank. I hope she wept not long and bitterly
For her poor sailor's sake ? O cruel wind
That kept our ship last night far out at sea !

Priest. "In life I was most happy in my son,"
She said, "and none may know the happiness
His image yields me at the hour of death."
—I found that she had laid upon her bed
Many of those little presents that you brought her
From your first voyage to the Indies. Shells
With a sad lustre brightened o'er the whiteness
Of these her funeral sheets; and gorgeous feathers,
With which, few hours before, her child was playing,
And lisping all the while his brother's name,
Formed a sad contrast with the pale, pale face
Lying so still beneath its auburn hair.
Two letters still are in her death-closed hand,
And will be buried with her. One was written
By your captain after the great victory
Over De Ruyter, and with loftiest praise
Of her son's consummate skill and gallantry
During the battle, told how he had saved
The lives of two young noble Hollanders,
By leaping overboard amid a storm.
The other, now almost effaced by tears,
Was from yourself, the last she had from you,
And spoke of your return. God bless thee, boy!
I am too old to weep—but such return
Wrings out the tears from my old withered heart.

Frank. O 'tis the curse of absence that our love
Becomes too sad—too tender—too profound
Towards all our far-off friends. Home we return,
And find them dead for whom we often wept,
Needlessly wept when they were in their joy!
Then goes the brokenhearted mariner
Back to the sea that welters drearily
Around the homeless earth!

Priest. Thy mother waits
Her son's approach—in beauty and in peace.

Frank. I go into her chamber—fear me not;
I will not rush into the mournful presence
With frantic outcry, and with violent steps
Most unbecoming 'mid the hush of death.
But I, with footsteps gentle as the dew,
And with suspended breath, will reach her bed;
There silent as she is, so will I be,
Lying beside my mother in her sleep
With my head upon her bosom—cold—cold—cold.

SCENE II.

A Little Room in a lonely Street in the Suburbs.—ISABEL *sitting with the Bible on her knees.*—*Enter* MAGDALENE.

Isabel. My gracious lady! bless that face again!
Here have I sat this long, long wretched day
Quite by myself, until I thought with horror
You never might return.
Magd. O needless fears!
Sister! thy anxious heart will never learn
To think more on thyself, and less on others.
Yet to thy friends thine are endearing faults,
And make thee loved the more.
Isabel. How pale you look!
Wearied, and pale, and languid—sit down here,
My gentle mistress! Blest is charity
From ordinary hands, but sure from thine
It must drop on the children of the poor,
Like dew from heaven upon th' unconscious lambs.
Magd. I will sit down a while. I have been kept
From home, beyond my promised hour, by sad
And unexpected duty. Frankfort's mother,
And her sweet little son, this morning died.
Isabel. Both dead! I might have known it from that face.
Magd. I have prepared their bodies for the grave,
And with such flowers as in a desert square
Of the city I could gather, are they drest,
Sleeping together sound and silently.
Isabel. O what will that kind-hearted sailor think,
When he returns from sea!
Magd. I shudder for him,
His love was so profound.
Isabel. O matchless pair!
In love, in beauty, and in innocence
So long united, now your orphan hearts
Will closer cling in your calamity;
As I have seen upon a leafless bough
Two young doves sitting silent, breast to breast.
Magd. Happy may he be for ever—may his ship
Linger in friendly port, or far at sea
Be chained in long, long calm, so that he comes not
Unto this City of the Plague! He lives,

And long will live—that thought is happiness
Enough for me. I see him on the deck,
Walking and speaking——O good Isabel!
A bright and sunny vision often breaks
Upon my praying soul, even at the bed
Where death is busy, and with contrite heart
I strive to dim it: Angel-like it is,
But oh! too dear in its humanity,
And, like a spirit lingering round a tomb,
It ever haunts my desolated bosom.

Isabel. Cherish that image—he will yet return
To live with thee for ever.

Magd. Noble spirit!
I thought I loved him well when we were happy,
And lived together 'mid all happy things,
As of our bliss partaking. Death has come,
And in affection left us parentless;
And now it seems that all the love I bore
My father and my mother has been poured
Into that mild, that brave, that generous heart.
Ay! what will he say indeed when he returns!

Isabel. Thy parents both are dead—one month ago
They died before thine eyes; yet where on earth
Might we behold a countenance arrayed
In the light of an immortal happiness,
O Magdalene! like to thine?

Magd. Sometimes I fear
I have a stony heart.

Isabel. The hush thou feel'st
Will breathe through Frankfort's soul on his return,
And you will speak together of the dead
As of some gentle beings who have gone
To sojourn in a far-off happy land
Which one day ye will visit.

Magd. I know well
That they who love their friends most tenderly
Still bear their loss the best. There is in love
A consecrated power, that seems to wake
Only at the touch of death from its repose
In the profoundest depths of thinking souls.
Superior to the outward signs of grief,
Sighing, or tears,—when these have passed away,
It rises calm and beautiful, like the moon
Saddening the solemn night, yet with that sadness
Mingling the breath of undisturbed peace.

Isabel. With that sublime faith ye will both be happy.
Magd. How bright and fair that afternoon returns
When last we parted! Even now I feel
Its dewy freshness in my soul. Sweet breeze!
That hymning like a spirit up the lake
Came through the tall pines on yon little isle
Across to us upon the vernal shore
With a kind friendly greeting. Frankfort blest
The unseen musician floating through the air,
And smiling said, "Wild harper of the hill!
So may'st thou play that ditty when once more
This lake I do revisit." As he spoke,
Away died the music in the firmament,
And unto silence left our parting hour.
No breeze will ever steal from nature's heart
So sweet again to me.
Isabel. Can'st thou not think
Of e'er again returning to the vale
Where we were born? Should Frankfort come from sea,
Thou art his own betrothèd: two such souls
Are not by God destined to live apart
Even on this earth, and ere you go to heaven
To join the blessed dead whom we deplore,
They would regard your life of sanctity
From their bright courts with joy, and your still walks
Through vale and forest by those holy watchers
Be kept from earthly ill.
Magd. Whate'er my doom,
It cannot be unhappy. God hath given me
The boon of resignation: I could die,
Though doubtless human fears would cross my soul,
Calmly even now;—yet if it be ordained
That I return unto my native valley
And live with Frankfort there, why should I fear
To say I might be happy—happier far
Than I deserve to be?—Sweet Rydal lake!
Am I again to visit thee? to hear
Thy glad waves murmuring all around my soul?
Isabel. Methinks I see us in a cheerful group
Walking along the margin of the bay
Where our lone summer-house . . . . .
Magd. Sweet mossy cell
So cool—so shady—silent and composed!
A constant evening full of gentle dreams!
Where joy was felt like sadness, and our grief

A melancholy pleasant to be borne.
Hath the green linnet built her nest this spring
In her own rose-bush near the quiet door?
Bright solitary bird! she oft will miss
Her human friends: Our orchard now must be
A wilderness of sweets, by none beloved.

Isabel. One blessed week would soon restore its beauty,
Were we at home. Nature can work no wrong.
The very weeds how lovely! the confusion
Doth speak of breezes, sunshine, and the dew.

Magd. I hear the murmuring of a thousand bees
In that bright odorous honeysuckle wall
That once enclosed the happiest family
That ever lived beneath the blessed skies.
Where is that family now? O Isabel,
I feel my soul descending to the grave,
And all these loveliest rural images
Fade, like waves breaking on a dreary shore.

Isabel. Even now I see a stream of sunshine bathing
The bright moss-roses round our parlour window!
Oh! were we sitting in that room once more!

Magd. 'Twould seem inhuman to be happy there,
And both my parents dead. How could I walk
On what I used to call my father's walk,
He in his grave! or look upon that tree
Each year so full of blossoms or of fruit
Planted by my mother, and her holy name
Graven on its stem by mine own infant hands!

Isabel. It would be haunted, but most holy ground.

Magd. How tenderly did Frankfort love my parents!
From the first hour we met, his image seemed
In the still bosom of our family
The silent picture of an absent friend!
—Methinks I hear his voice while he recites
Some fragment of a poem, or wild song
About the troubles of the pitiless sea.
Most other sailors have loud jocund voices;
But his was always low and somewhat sad,
As if he bore within his soul the sound
Of that wild-raging world, the memory
Of battle and of shipwreck, and of friends
By death ta'en from him or captivity.

Isabel. Much hath that brave man suffered, yet he pities
All them who mourn—nor on himself bestows
So much as one sad dream.

Magd. Dost thou remember
That melancholy but delightful strain
He framed one summer evening in our cell,
When that fair orphan came with streaming eyes,
To tell us that the lady of the castle,
Marie Le Fleming, on her deathbed lay!
Isabel. I recollect it well.
Magd. The sorrowful
Still love to muse on all distressing things,
And sure her death was so. Repeat the dirge
Composed while she was parting from the earth.
Ere yet thy voice begin, I see the land,
The beautiful land of mountains, lakes, and woods,
All glimmering with a melancholy light
Which must unto mine eyes endure for ever.
O Isabel! when o'er this doleful city
Rises the snow-white tower of Grassmere church—
——Go on,—go on, for I begin to rave.

DIRGE.

THE fairy on Helvellyn breathes
Into the diamond's lustre fair,
And in that magic gleam she wreathes
The dewdrops round her glittering hair.

The driving blast—the dimming rains
May there disturb its secret place,
But evermore the stone retains
The image of that loveliest face.

So in our lady's radiant eyes
Joy looked when she was yet a child,
And there 'mid shades of sickness lies
Beauteous as when at first she smiled.—

'Tis said there is a wondrous bird
That ne'er alights to fold her wings,
But far up in the sky is heard
The music which the creature sings.

On plumes unwearied, soft and bright
She floateth still in hymning mirth,
For ever in her native light!
Unstained by any touch of earth!

Our lady's soft and gentle feet
O'er earth in mortal motion swim,
But angels come from heaven to meet
The incense of her holy hymn.—

On yonder pool so black and deep,
In her green cradle rocked to rest,
Behold the water-lily sleep!
Serenely, with untroubled breast!

Alike unto that fearless flower
The arrowy sleet—the dewy balm—
The sunlight's smile—the tempest's lower—
For hers is an eternal calm.

Across our gracious lady's bed
A blast hath come as from the grave,
But on her pillow rests her head
Calm as that lily on the wave.

From heaven fair beings come at night
To watch o'er mortals while they sleep;
Angels are they, whose sole delight
It is to comfort those who weep.

How softly on the dreamer's head
They lay their soft and snow-white hands!
One smile! then in a moment fled,
They melt away to happier lands.

I wake! and lo! my lady fair
Is smiling near the orphan's bed,
With all the charms the living wear
Joined to the beauty of the dead.—

O perfect is a plaintive tune
When slowly sung at fall of even,
In some wild glen beneath the moon,
When silence binds the earth and heaven!

Remembrance rises faint and dim
Of sorrows suffered long ago,
And joy delighteth in the hymn
Although it only breathe of woe.

Our lady's spirit it is pure
As music of departed years!
On earth too beauteous to endure,
So sad—so wild—so full of tears!

Magd. Methinks I see the splendid funeral
O'erspreading Grassmere churchyard. Vain parade!

Lost on the thousand weepers standing there,
With the image of that corpse so beautiful
Lying all dressed with flowers before their souls.
The ancient castle from that dismal day
Seemed going fast to ruin—the oak-wood
Is black and sullen 'mid sunshiny hours,
And oft upon the green and primrose bank
Of her own Rydal lake, the voice of grief
Comes with the little waves, a peaceful dirge
Of Nature o'er the lady whom she loved.

Isabel. Nature most gently led her unto rest.
And as her eyes grew dim, there swam before them
Sweet images of all that most she loved
Breathed from the heavens and earth. O different far
Must be our doom! Hark! hark the nightly shrieks!
At the same stated hour! those thundering wheels!
Ah me! I never hear that hideous noise,
But the deep hush of Grassmere vale—the tower
Chiming through morning silence, and the lake
Reflecting all the heavens——

Magd. Of this no more,
My gentle Isabel! Can we speak so long
About ourselves, and Frankfort's mother lying
A corpse! It seems as if we had not loved her.
O we are selfish beings even when we think
That we have weaned our souls from earthly joys.

Isabel. When is the funeral?

Magd. At twelve o'clock
To-night will that delightful old man come,
To see them decently carried to the grave;
And I will in that small procession walk
Close to her dear, dear head. She was beloved
By all who saw her once—so beautiful!
So meekly beautiful! so sadly fair!
So happy in her solemn widowhood!

Isabel. You will return at midnight?

Magd. Yes—kind heart!
And for one single day I must refrain
From visiting the sick. A trying day
Hath this been to me. O ye holy Ones,
With saints united in beatitude,
Look down upon us in this lonely room,
Sitting in the dimness of mortality,
With sorrow in our souls!—My Isabel,
I may not chant with thee our evening hymn,

For I am faint. Already have I poured
My heart in holy song unto the ear
Of pitying Jesus—sing it by thyself:
In silence will I join the sacred strain.

HYMN.

THE air of death breathes through our souls,
The dead all round us lie;
By day and night the death-bell tolls
And says, "Prepare to die!"

The face that in the morning sun
We thought so wondrous fair,
Hath faded, ere his course was run,
Beneath its golden hair.

I see the old man in his grave
With thin locks silvery grey;
I see the child's bright tresses wave
In the cold breath of the clay.

The loving ones we loved the best,
Like music all are gone!
And the wan moonlight bathes in rest
Their monumental stone.

But not when the death-prayer is said,
The life of life departs:
The body in the grave is laid,
Its beauty in our hearts.

At holy midnight voices sweet
Like fragrance fill the room,
And happy ghosts with noiseless feet
Come bright'ning from the tomb.

We know who sends the visions bright,
From whose dear side they came!—
We veil our eyes before thy light,
We bless our Saviour's name!

This frame of dust, this feeble breath,
The Plague may soon destroy;
We think on Thee, and feel in death
A deep and awful joy.

Dim is the light of vanished years
In the glory yet to come;
O idle grief! O foolish tears!
When Jesus calls us home.

Like children for some bauble fair
That weep themselves to rest;
We part with life—awake! and there
The jewel in our breast!

SCENE III.

The Open Street.—A Crowd of Men and Women gathered in a tumultuous manner.

1*st Man.* There goes a notable fool! The moon is yonder
Shining like the sun, but with a tamer light,
And yet with blazing oil-torch puffing forth
Its noisome vapours on each passenger,
This greasy varlet scours along the street,
Fixing his puny stars where'er he stops,
In many a long line twinkling sleepily.
What is the use of these same lamps? The Plague
Is not afraid of light, and kills by day,
By moon-light, star-light, lamp-light, every light.
Is it that we may see each other's faces
More clearly as we pass? Now, on my soul,
I have not seen one face for these three months
That spoke not of the grave. This very wretch,
With long lean shrivelled shanks, looked as he passed
Like some well-seasoned dry anatomy
Escaped from Surgeons'-hall. The Plague, my girl,
Hath spoiled the beauties of good London town,
And (let me see thy face below this lamp),
Good faith! they're not so useless as I thought—
Hadst thou been Eve, Adam had ne'er been tempted.

2*d Man.* Ay! folks may jest, and with right heavy hearts.
For my own part, I don't expect this Plague
Will change its quarters, long as it has left
A single man alive. As for the moon
That shines so brightly, have you ever heard
What the Astrologers say of that moon?

Woman. Tell, tell us what the Astrologers have said.

2*d Man.* They say it is the moon that sends the Plague.

1*st Man.* The man in the moon? then is he changed indeed
Since days of yore. I have seen him when a boy

Crouching beneath his sticks most wofully,
Condemned to bear the load in punishment
Of Sabbath-breaking. Now he walks erect
With a huge sweeping scythe, and mows us down,
Us poor unhappy Londoners, like grass
By the acre.

3d Man. Yea! before the Plague burst out,
All who had eyesight witnessed in the city
Dread Apparitions, that sent through the soul
Forebodings of some wild calamity.
The very daylight seemed not to be poured
Down from the sun—a ghastly glimmering haze
Sent upwards from the earth; while every face
Looked wan and sallow, gliding through the streets
That echoed in the darkness. When the veil
Of mist was drawn aside, there hung the sun
In the unrejoicing atmosphere, blood-red,
And beamless in his wrath. At morn and even,
And through the dismal day, that fierce aspect
Glared on the city, and many a wondering group
Gazed till they scarce believed it was the sun.
—Did any here behold, as I beheld,
That phantom who three several nights appeared,
Sitting upon a cloud-built throne of state
Right o'er St Paul's Cathedral? On that throne
At the dead hour of night he took his seat,
And monarch-like stretched out his mighty arm
That shone like lightning. In that kingly motion
There seemed a steadfast threat'ning—and his features,
Gigantic 'neath their shadowy diadem,
Frowned, as the phantom vowed within his heart
Perdition to the city. Then he rose,
Majestic spectre! keeping still his face
Towards the domes beneath, and disappeared,
Still threatening with his outstretched arm of light,
Into a black abyss behind the clouds.

Voice from the crowd. I saw him—on the very night
I saw him,
When first the Plague broke out.

3d Man. And saw ye not
The sheeted corpses stalking through the sky
In long, long troops together—yet all silent,
And, unobservant of each other, gliding
Down a dark flight of steps that seemed to lead
Into the bosom of eternity?

Voice from the crowd. Go on, go on—tell us of what thou sawest:
Thou art a scholar, and thy tongue can speak
Even like a written book. What sawest thou else?
3d Man. I have seen hearses moving through the sky!
Not few and solitary, as on earth
They pass us by upon a lonesome road,
But thousands, tens of thousands moved along
In grim procession—a long league of plumes
Tossing in the storm that roared aloft in heaven,
Yet bearing onwards through the hurricane,
A black, a silent, a wild cavalcade
That nothing might restrain; till in a moment
The heavens were freed, and all the sparkling stars
Looked through the blue and empty firmament!
Voice. They all foretold the Plague.
3d Man. And I have seen
A mighty churchyard spread its dreary realms
O'er half the visible heavens—a churchyard blackened
With ceaseless funerals that besieged the gates
With lamentation and a wailing echo.
O'er that aërial cemet'ry hung a bell
Upon a black and thund'rous looking cloud,
And there at intervals it swung and tolled
Throughout the startled sky! Not I alone,
But many thousands heard it—leaping up,
Not knowing whether it might be a dream,
As if an earthquake shook them from their beds,
Nor dared again to sleep.
1st Woman. Cease, cease that jargon
About sights seen in the sky. The city shows
Phantoms, and hearses, and churchyards enow,
Without recourse to visions in the heaven.
Voice. Heed not that foolish wretch—go on, go on,
I love to feel my hair stand up on end,
And my heart beat till I can hear its sound.
3d Man. Dost not remember that black stormy night
When all at once the hurricane ceased,
And silence came as suddenly as light
Bursting on darkness? In that awful hush
The city like a panting monster lay,
Fearful of danger which it knew not of,
Yet felt that it was near. Then overhead,
As from a floating cloud, a mighty voice
Came like the roar of ocean, "Death! death! death!"

A thousand echoes wailed the giant-cry
Faintlier and faintlier—till once more the storm
Rose on the night, and that portentous voice
Left the pale city quaking in its fear.

2d Woman. His words are like a dream—more terrible
These sights and sounds from the disastrous sky
Than all the real terrors of the Plague.

1st Man. Come, woman! with that wild and coal-black eye,
Let us hear thee speak! no idle dreamer thou!
I like that smile of scorn and bitterness.

1st Woman. I cannot say that I dislike the Plague.
Good faith! it yields rare harvest to the poor
Who are industrious, and will sit by night
Round beds where richer servants dare not come.
Yet after all 'tis not the Plague that kills,
But fear. A shake of the head—a sapient look—
Two or three ugly words muttered through the teeth—
Will go long way to send unto his grave
A soldier who has stood fire in his day.
And as for women, and the common run
Of men—for instance mercers, lawyers' clerks,
And others not worth mentioning, they die,
If a sick-nurse only look upon her watch
To know the hour of the night. What matters it?
In a hundred years—all will be well again.

2d Woman. You must have seen rare sights in your time, good woman!

1st Woman. I have seen for two months past some score i' the day
Give up the ghost. No easy business
To lay so many out. When they paid well,
I did my office neatly—but the poor
Or niggardly, I put them overhand
In a somewhat careless way—gave them a stretch
Or two—down with their eye-lids—shut their mouths,
And so I left them. 'Twas but slovenly work.

2d Woman. Ha! ha! ha!—Why wert thou so kind, brave wench!
Unto the lazy cruel-hearted rich?
They owe at least one kindness to the poor.
Let them feel what still they preach of—gratitude.

1st Woman. I know not what the gentry and nobility
Think of this way of burial. In they go,
Beggar and banker, porter, gentleman,

The cinder-wench and my white-handed lady,
Into one pit. O rare! rare bed-fellows!
There they all lie in uncomplaining sleep.

2d Woman. Canst give some little history of the dead?

1st Woman. Yes—I could make your pale face paler still,
Did I choose to be talkative—but one
Short history of a wretch who died to-day
I will give—and his name was Rivington.
Eternal curses blast that hateful name!—
Curst be he even within the crowded grave!
And may his lingering spirit feel the pressure
Of a hundred corpses weighing down its life,
In agony and torment, down to hell!

2d Woman. Come, for the story—you may spare your curses.

God wot! you waste your breath. The gentleman
Is dead—I'll warrant that his soul's ta'en care of.

1st Woman. I was sent for to a house that was Plague-struck
To lay out two small children. Rivington!
Methought I knew that name. Could it be he
Whom twenty years before I knew too well
Among the towers of Oxford, where he studied,
As some said, for the church; a worthy son
Of such a mother—no less worthy child
Of such a rare nurse—Oxford and the church!
At once I knew the caitiff, as he lay
Dying alone 'mid his dead family,
Whose blue swollen faces had a look in them
Of their most wicked father. Had they lived,
They had been evil—no good could have come
From blood of his—it had a taint in it.
I had forgot to mention that his wife
Was likewise lying dead. Poor soul! her face
Was beautiful, and seemed the face of sorrow
Rather than of death. Much no doubt had she suffered,
Married for ten long years to such a husband!
When I had done my duty, "Where's your gold?"
I asked this master of a family,
Who with a fixed and stupid face was sitting
Idle in his chair. "Where, ruffian! is your gold?"
But, to make short a rather tedious story,
He knew me—knew that I was come to curse him,
To howl my dying curses in his ear;

Nor would I listen to his cowardly voice,
Imploring mercy and forgiveness. Curse him!
2d Woman. What was his crime?
1st Woman. We were three sisters once,
Happy and young, and some thought beautiful,
And by our cheerful industry supported
Our palsied mother. But this demon came,
And by his wheedling arts and tempting gold,
Unknown to one another we all fell
Into sin, and shame, and sorrow. Our sick mother
Died of a broken heart—one sister died
In childbed—and consumption bred of grief
Soon took away another. I alone,
Reserved for farther woe and wickedness,
Lived on—but yet methinks this one small day,
Those two blest hours in which I saw him dying,
That minute when the rattle in his throat
Closed his vile tongue for ever, and the moment
When one convulsive gasp left him a corpse,
Gave me my share of earthly happiness,
And life feels life thus sweetened by revenge.
2d Woman. Felt you no little twingeing of remorse,
Thinking on days when I suppose you loved him?
1st Woman. I never loved him, and he knows what love
He bore to me. Both had our punishment!
I for my folly, vanity, and pride,
Base love of gold (for then that love was base
Which now is right, and just, and necessary),
Have led a houseless life of infamy,
Despised, cursed, fondled, starved. He for his lust,
Unnumbered lies, and fearless cruelty,
Hath seen his children die before his face,
And his wife perish, stricken into death
'Mid the screaming of insanity. Remorse
Disturbed his ruffled bed and dug his grave,
While she, within whose breast he often lay,
With the count'nance of a fury glared upon him,
And shook the dying caitiff in the pangs
Of pain and of despair. The hand of God
Was there in me, its worthless instrument.
2d Woman. Let's go to merrymaking—right good
friends
We two shall make. Left naked in the street
Was I, a little infant by its mother
Exposed to death. I in a poorhouse passed

My hated, hateful youth ; my womanhood,
Like thine, was chiefly passed where I began
My chance existence—in the street ; and now
Without a friend, food, money, or a home,
What care I for the Plague ? Let us go, my friend,
To merrymaking.

1st Man. All this is mighty well,
But leads to nothing. Wilt thou rob a church,
Good master Pale-face ? Wilt thou rob a church,
And share 'mid this our ragged company
The general spoil ?

2d Man. Why, any place but a church !

1st Man. Ha ! thou'rt a scrupulous robber ! and the sound
Of these psalm-singing, shrill-voiced choristers
Would frighten thee, gliding through the moonlit aisle.
Troth, man ! 'tis well worth fighting with a ghost
For such a booty. Silver candlesticks,
Gold-gilt, are standing idle on the altar,
Themselves a boy-load ! and they say a Crozier
Most richly ornamented may be found
In a lucky nook, no despicable bauble !
But ten times worth such trifles, think thou, Jesuit !
On the bright vessels for communion-service,
Of massy silver, which the surpliced priest
With both hands gives unto the trembling grasp
Of young communicants. When melted down,
They will make us all as rich as Crœsus. Come
Let us off to the Cathedral.

2d Man. I for one
Stay where I am, or seek some other duty.
'Tis absolute sacrilege. I could not sleep
If I had lent a hand to rob a church.
I go not there to pray—neither will I go
To steal—'tis little short of sacrilege.
However, I am not obstinate, and 'tis pity
To part from pleasant company : suppose
We break into some house that is Plague-struck ?
Its tenants probably are dead—or dying,
And will make small resistance—to kill such
Cannot be well called murder.

Several voices. Agreed ! agreed !

(A wild cry is heard, and a half-naked Man comes raving furiously along.)

2d Man. 'Tis the mad prophet! for God's sake let him pass.

Maniac. Woe! woe! unto the city! woe! woe! woe!
The Prince of the air his palace fills to-day
With wicked spirits in their guilt destroyed.
Repent! repent! before the red-eyed Wrath
Wither you to ghosts. His bloody scimitar
Is waving o'er the city. On your knees
Fall down, ye wild blasphemers!—'Tis too late;
Woe! woe! unto the city! woe! woe! woe!

2d Man. We neither rob a church nor house this night.

Maniac. Repent, ye miserable troop of ghosts.

2d Man. We cannot repent—fear binds us fast to guilt.

Maniac. Another month, and I am left alone
In the vast city, shrieking like a demon!
Condemned to an eternal solitude
Peopled but by ghosts, that will not, will not speak!
All gliding past me, wan and silently,
With curses in their eyes, and death-like frost
Breathed from their bony hands, whose scornful fingers
Keep pointing at me rooted to the stones,
That yield no sound to comfort my stopped heart.

Crowd. O what a dreadful dream envelops him!

Maniac. My sins have brought this judgment on the city.
One sin there is that may not be forgiven,
And that was mine: so from the lurid sky
Down came the mighty and the fearful God,
And like a flash of lightning withered up
The hearts of His poor creatures. I alone
Am doomed to live for ever in the depths
Of lifeless silence, which my maddened shrieks
In vain will startle, like a lonely bird
Wailing unheeded in a vast sea-cave.
—O Jesus! thou Destroyer! once again
Thy voice of thunder stuns me. Woe! woe! woe!
—The streets do run with blood! and groans of death
As with an earthquake shake the toppling walls.
Down falls yon spire—huzza! down, down to hell.
Why stare ye so, ye dumb and pale-faced ghosts?
O for a whirlwind's wing to sweep you away
Like broken clouds, or the autumnal leaves
Hissing through the cold heart of a dreary wood.
—I hear the voice!—Woe! woe! unto the city—woe! woe! woe!

[*He rushes away shrieking.*

1st Man. O base and wretched cowards! by the shrieks
Of a poor madman scared and terrified!
Thus they who take their conscience by the beard,
And laugh to scorn the voice that cannot lie,
At their own shadows start! now palsy-stricken
By the ravings of a drivelling idiot.

1st Woman. See where heaven dawns on hell! Even in the path
Of that tormented demon, onward floats
An Angel! Mercy following Despair!

2d Woman. Let us fall down and worship her.

(*Enter* MAGDALENE *dressed in white, with a Bible in her hand.*)

1st Woman. It is the lovely Lady no one knows,
Who walks through lonesome places day and night,
Giving to the poor who have no earthly friend;
To the dying comfort, to the dead a grave!
I am a hardened sinner, yet my heart
Softens at that smile; and when I hear her voice,
I feel as in my days of innocence.

[*They kneel down before her.*

Magd. Rise up, my sisters and my brothers, rise!

Voice. How graciously she speaks unto the poor!
Angels have walked this earth. If thou art one—
And that voice tells thou art, whate'er its words—
Let us still kneel before thee! sinful we!
And in our lives most desperately wicked;
Yet, child of heaven! believe us when we say
Religion hath not wholly left our hearts.

Magd. O piteous spectacle! by my very birth
I am a creature sinful as yourselves!
And if my life have freer been from guilt,
I owe the blessing of my innocence
To Him whose blood can change the hue of sin
Into the whiteness of thrice-driven snow.

2d Woman. We are too wicked now to hope for pardon.

Magd. Ye are not lost, but think that ye are so,
And therefore will not hope. Cheer up your souls!
Calmness will lead to hope, and hope to faith,
And faith unto that awful happiness
That walks unquaking through the shades of death,
Triumphant over nature's agony.

2d Woman. Walk not away! speak to us yet a while!

Magd. Return unto your homes, all ye that own
A home—a blessing even when desolate.

If young or old or sick be pining there,
Think on the comfort of the Comforter.
If all have perished, turn your eyes to Him
Who dwells in Zion, and you need not fear
The dreadful stillness of unlooked-for Death.
I will pray with you; ne'er forget your prayers!
Even now you felt how sweet it was to bless
Me, a poor sinful creature, since you think
That nature framed me kind and pitiful.
Pray unto Him who loved you on the cross;
Evening and morn and noon-day worship Him,
And what although your homes be desolate!
Your hearts will sing for joy—even as the lark
'Mid evening sunshine hymning up the sky,
Forgetful that since morn the spoiler's hand
Had torn her low-built nest.

2d Woman. O that the Plague
Would strike me dead before thou disappear—
For when thy heavenly face hath passed away,
What shall protect me from the ghastly looks,
The broken voice, of guilt and agony?

Magd. Promise to pass this night in prayer.

Several voices. We promise.

1st Man. She is indeed most beautiful! O misery,
To think that heaven is but a dream of fools!
Why gaze I on her thus, as if I felt her
To be immortal! Something touched my soul
In that sad voice which earth can ne'er explain,
Something quite alien to our troubled being,
That carried on my soul into the calm
Of that eternal ocean!—Can it be?
Can a smile—a word—destroy an atheist's creed?
—Ha! this is mockery!

2d Woman. See how she waves
Her snow-white hand, from which a blessing falls
On all the crowded street! How silently
The starry midnight passes o'er our heads!
How gladsome the pure moonlight! Oh that angel
Hath by her beauty and her innocence
Won the great God of mercy to look down
On the children of despair. We part in peace!

SCENE IV.

FRANKFORT *sitting beside the Bodies of his Mother and little Brother.—The* PRIEST *and* WILMOT *standing at some distance.*

Frankfort. Thou need'st not look with such sad eyes on me,
Belovèd old man! On that countenance
I now have gazed so long, that its deep calm
Hath sunk into my heart.
Priest. The comforter
Hath come to thee in solitude.
Frank. When left
With this still image, I confess my voice
Called upon her loud and frantically
To start up into life. Even then a smile
Came o'er her face, a sweet upbraiding smile
That silently reproved my senseless grief.
O look upon her face! eternity
Is shadowed there! a pure immortal calm,
Whose presence makes the tumult of this world
Pass like a fleeting breeze, and through the soul
Breathes the still ether of a loftier climate!
Priest. Many sweet faces have I seen in death,
But never one like this. Death beautifies
Even the stern face of guilt, and I have seen
The troubled countenance of a sinful man
Breathed over, soon as life had passed away,
With a soft delicate shade,—as from the wing
Of Innocence returning to shed tears
Over the being she had loved in youth.
But here lies perfect beauty! her meek face,
Free as that child's from any touch of sin,
Yet shining with that loftier sanctity
That holds communion with the promised heavens.
Frank. (*to Wilmot*). Kind friend! thou weep'st! Such tears will not disturb
Her sleep! see where they trickle silently
Down that unmoving cheek that feels them not,
As if they flowed from eyes that may not weep.
Wil. My friend! may I kneel down and kiss her cheek?
Frank. Start not at feeling that fair face so cold!
I often said that I would bring my friend

To see my mother. Lo! I have fulfilled
My promise! There she lies!
Wil. As I touched her lips
Methought her dead face smiled a blessing on me!
Frank. Take thou this ringlet of her auburn hair:
'Tis a sweet auburn, mingled though it be
With the soft silvery grey! and be it blended
With these thick-clustering curls of undimmed joy,
In beauty parted from the radiant head
Of this delightful child, and for my sake
Keep them for ever
Priest. If deserved by love,
Part of these holy relics should be mine.
Frank. Ay! ay!—Now may I ask whose pious care
Hath placed these death-flowers here? Methinks I read
In the fair disposition of these flowers
The delicate language of a female hand,
Not unforgetful of the skill that cheered
Its hours of happier task, even in the sad
Graceful adornment of the dead! One hand,
One hand alone on all the earth was worthy
To place these flowers—but it is far away!
Priest. What if that hand it were?
Frank. Nay! mock me not.
Haply thou heardest not my words aright.
Priest. One hand alone thou rightly saidst was worthy
To fix that wreath. The fingers of that hand
Stirred not the braided hair that they did touch,
Nor moved one fold upon the funeral sheet,
So that the flowers they shed seemed dropping there
In a dewy shower from heaven! Thy Magdalene
It was indeed whose fingers dressed the dead.
Frank. Magdalene! and in the midst of this fell Plague!
Mine is a most mysterious destiny.
O spirit of my mother! pardon me,
Though with thy dead body lying in my sight,
My soul with pangs returns unto the living,
If Magdalene indeed be with the living!—
That smile hath life in it. O blest old man,
Thou art indeed the servant of the Lord!
Priest. She lives! and even now is on her way
To attend thy mother's funeral!
Frank. Speak—speak—
Priest. She is an orphan.

Frank. O my heart is dry!
Were Magdalene's self a corpse, I could not weep.
Priest. I need not tell at length the mournful tale.
Three happy weeks with their delighted daughter
They walked the city—and the day was fixed
For their return unto their native mountains.
But the Plague came . . . . .
Frank (*passionately*). They surely were not thrown,
In the face of pity weeping all in vain,
Together thrown into that ghastly pit. . . . . .
Priest. 'Twas easy then to find a place of rest
In consecrated ground, and they were buried,
The very day they died, in a quiet spot,
Even not without its beauty, at the foot
Of a small tree that Nature's self had planted,
In a city churchyard standing quite alone.
Frank. And where was Magdalene on the burial-day?
Priest. I must not speak to thee of that one day!
But it is past and gone, and Magdalene
Is living. This is all I dare to utter.
There is an air that memory may not breathe,
And black oblivion hath her sacred ground
Guarded for aye by woe and misery.
Frank. Buried in a city 'mid a crowd of tombs!
Those floating locks blenched by the ocean storms
Through many a perilous midnight—and that head,
On which the snows of age were gently falling
Through the hushed air of peace—both in the earth!
—Spoke they not of a burial-place far off?
Priest. They did—but with a smile.
Frank. It matters not.
—There is a little churchyard on the side
Of a low hill, that hangs o'er Rydal-lake,
Behind the house where Magdalene was born.
Most beautiful it is; a vernal glade
Enclosed with wooded rocks! where a few graves
Lie sheltered, sleeping in eternal calm.
Go thither when you will, and that green spot
Is bright with sunshine. There they hoped to lie!
And there they often spoke to Magdalene
Of their own dying day. For death put on
The countenance of an angel in the place
Which he had sanctified. I see the spot
Which they had chosen for their sleep—but far,
O far away from that sweet sanctuary

They rest, and all its depth of sunny calm.
Methinks my Magdalene never dare return
To her native cottage.
Priest. No! she only smiled
When I implored her to forsake the city;
Then said she would not leave her parents' bones.
Fain had she each day visited your mother,
But feared to bring infection——
Frank. O my mother!
Forgive me, Heaven! I had not sure forgotten
That I am listening to thee by her coffin!
My Magdalene's care was vain—she came at last,
As these sad death-flowers tell.
Priest. Not in some spot
Apart from death, in deathlike loneliness,
Doth Magdalene dwell. Throughout the livelong day,
And many a livelong night, for these three months,
Hath she been ministering at the dying bed,
From which, with an unnatural cowardice,
Affection, ardent in the times of joy,
Had fled,—perhaps to stumble o'er the grave.
—What! though thy Magdalene heretofore had known
Only the name of sorrow, living far
Within the heart of peace, with birds and flocks,
The flowers of the earth, and the high stars of heaven,
Companions of her love and innocence;
Yet she who, in that region of delight,
Slumbered in the sunshine or the sheltered shade,
Rose with the rising storm, and like an angel,
With hair unruffled in its radiance, stood
Beside the couch of tossing agony;
As undisturbed as on some vernal day
Walking alone through mountain-solitude,
To bring home in her arms a new-yeaned lamb
Too feeble for the snow!
Frank. I wonder not!
Its beauty was most touching, and I loved
The bright and smiling surface of her soul:
But I have gazed with adoration
Upon its awful depths profoundly calm,
Seen far down shadowing the sweet face of heaven.
Priest. Many think she bears a charm against the Plague;
And they are not deceived. A charm she hath,
But hidden not in ring or amulet,
Sleeping in the quiet of her sinless soul.

Some think she is a spirit—many look
With tears of sorrow on a mortal creature
Whom death may steal away—but all agree
That a thing so piteous, kind, and beautiful,
Did never walk before upon this earth.

(*The door opens, and* MAGDALENE *enters.*)

Priest. Behold the blessed one of whom we speak!

Magd. (*seeing Frankfort and Wilmot kneeling with their faces on the bed*).

Haply some sorrowing friends unknown to me!

Frank. (*rising*). Magdalene! my holy Magdalene!

Magd. (*throwing herself down beside him*).

Hush! hush! my Frankfort! thus I fold one arm
Round thy blest neck, and with the other thus
I touch the silent dead!

Frank. O Magdalene!
'Tis a wild night of bliss and misery.

Magd. We both are orphans.

Frank. Hush! I know it all.—
An angel's arms are round me—No! a mortal's—
A mortal thing sublimed and beautified
By woes that would have broken many a heart.
In thy embrace what do I care for death!
In ev'ry breathing of thy holy bosom
I feel contentment, faith, and piety;
Nor can the shadow of this passing world,
Breathed o'er thy face of perishable beauty,
Bedim thy holy spirit—it is bright,
Nor seems to heed that gushing flood of tears.

Priest to Wilmot. Let us retire. The hour is drawing near,
Fixed for the funeral.

Wilmot. Heaven in mercy sent
That angel, with her dewy voice, and eyes
More dewy still, to stand beside the grave,
And show my friend how beautiful in heaven
His mother now must be! That silent smile
To resignation might convert despair!

(*Priest and* WILMOT *retire.*)

SCENE V.

A Churchyard—Midnight—a clear Moon and serene Sky—a new-dug Grave close to the Church-wall, on which are leaning the Sexton and his Assistant.

Sexton. 'Tis a decent job enough ; for a beginner,
You handle your spade in no unpromising way ;
And when our churchyard business revives,
(Confound that pit with its great ugly mouth—
'Tis the ruin of the trade)—you'll make, my boy,
A very pretty grave-digger. But hark ye !
When standing good five feet below the sod,
Keep thine eyes open, and don't fling the gravel
Into my face, thou screech-owl. Stretch thyself
Up boldly like the son of a grave-digger,
And form the bank above thee neat and trim.
I wish to have some credit in my graves ;
And even although the kinsfolk be poor judges,
And mind these things but little, I have an eye,
A grave-digger's eye, that loves to a nicety
To see a trench drawn for its own dear sake.
—Why art thou shivering there, thou Aspen-leaf?

Boy. I never liked to walk through a churchyard.
And now, at the very dead hour o' the night,
This standing overhead within a grave
Hath made me colder than an icicle,—
Ay, numb as any grave-stone of them all.
I would not care to dig a grave in a field
Out in the country, and by good daylight ;
But to keep poking in a deep black hole,
In the middle of a pavement of gravestones,
With such a ghostlike moon above one's head,
And flinging out, instead of good plain pebbles,
Still yellow-grinning and worm-eaten skulls !—
'Tis shocking work.

Sexton. Fie ! you disgrace your trade,
You jackanapes ! an ancient noble trade.
I'll get some bungler of a village sexton,
Some bell-ringer well versed in psalmody,
To bury thee like a dog, and lay thy coffin
With the wrong end to the headstone. Out on thee !

Boy. I think, old man! with both feet in the grave,
As one may say . . . . .

Sexton. Ho! ho! advice, thou parrot!
With both feet in the grave! I will be singing
Over my work for many a year to come,
When thou, and chicken-hearted birds like thee,
Will all be caged. Death loves a grave-digger,
And would not hurt a hair upon his head.
As for the Plague, he is afraid of us—
With a mattock and a shovel o'er my shoulder
He looks at me, and passes to such game
As thou, and smooth-faced maidens like to thee.

Boy. Didst ever see the lady and her child
Whose grave we have been digging—for if so,
And yet hast felt no pity at thy work,
Thou wouldst not scruple for a yellow King Charles
To bury a Christian lying in a trance.

Sexton. Six years ago I buried her good husband,
As proper brave a man as e'er was laid
Under the turf. I have known the family
Three generations, and I loved them all.
But where's the use of whimpering like a child
That never saw a grave? Yet, by my spade,
I think if I had any tears to shed,
I would waste them all upon this very mould!
For a sweeter lady never walked to church,
Nor stepped across a grave-stone. She is in heaven!
And he who thinks so well may dig her grave
As merrily as a gard'ner in the spring.

Boy. See! yonder two men standing with drawn swords!
We shall be murdered.

Sexton. Murdered! that's a trifle.
But robbed of all our money. Hold it fast
If you know where to find it—grave-diggers
Still carry gold about them at their work.
They'll murder, rob, and bury us in a twinkling.

(*The Sexton and Boy stand silent within the shadow of the Church-wall, and* WALSINGHAM *and* FITZGERALD *approach.*)

Fitz. This place is fitter for our present purpose
Than that we fixed before. Here is a grave
Just ready for thy body, Walsingham!
Thou may'st have warmer lodgings for the night
At the price of one small word—"forgiveness."

Wal. Methinks such high-toned pride but ill becomes
A scene like this. What! ask forgiveness
Of such a thing as thou—while the great God
Beholds us standing here with murd'rous thoughts
Upon the dark brink of eternity!
Think what thou art, and what thou soon may'st be.
Fitz. Fool! villain! liar! thus do I retort
Thy insupportable words. Thine is the pride—
The hardened scorn is thine. But the hour is past
In which I might have pardoned thee—and now
Look at this rapier, and prepare to die.
Wal. I am no coward. Yea! I wish to die—
But in the shadow of the house of God,
I must not be a murderer
Fitz. House of God!
Right pious words! but they will not avail thee!
I think the Plague might well have scared such dreams,
Best cherished in the nursery, or by women
Whose faint hearts lean when sinking on religion.
God cares, forsooth, for us His worshippers!
Yet though we perish thousands in one night,
And like the brutes are buried, still we call Him
Lord—Priest, and Father, and still hope to rise
Even from the crowded pit where we lie smothered
Like bees in brimstone,—to rise beautiful,
And soar to God's throne, spirits glorified!
O bitter mockery! Look into that pit,
With all its dread corruption steaming up
To heaven, like an unheeded sacrifice,
And then dare talk of immortality.
Sexton (*discovering himself*).
I crave your pardon—but I did not dig
That grave for you, much-honoured gentlemen.
It is bespoken, and the worthy owner
In half an hour will come to take possession.
I have heard of people fighting for small cause,
Or none—but cutting throats in a churchyard
Is something new, and 'tis an ugly practice.
Fitz. (*rushing on Walsingham*). Here's at thy heart!
(*He receives Walsingham's sword in his heart, and falls, exclaiming*), O Christ! stone-dead! stone-dead!
Sexton. Killing no murder—'twas in self-defence.
You've a quick eye, good sir! or he had pinked you.
These swords are ugly and unhandy things—
I never liked them.

Wal. Now I am a murderer!
That hideous name befits me! I have sent him,
In all the blindness of his atheist heart,
To his dread audit! Pho! his blood will redden
Upon my hands for ever. Wretch that I am!
Sexton. I hear them coming.
Wal. Whom dost thou hear coming?
Sexton. Listen! and hear the holy sound of psalms.
(*The funeral approaches the grave where* WALSINGHAM *is sitting near the dead body,*—MAGDALENE, ISABEL, PRIEST, FRANKFORT, *and* WILMOT.)
Priest. What shocking sight is this? O Walsingham,
My much-beloved and much-erring boy!
I fear that thou hast done a deed of sin,
For which remorse will haunt thee all thy days.
Wal. I hear thy voice, but dare not lift my eyes
Up to thy solemn countenance. I could bear
Thy anger, but the pity of the righteous
Speaks to the little virtue that is left
In my distracted soul, and when I hear it,
O that in dumb deaf darkness I could lie!
Frank. We two are brothers in calamity.
Wal. Frankfort? O now I know who fills that coffin.
Behold how with these blood-dedabbled hands
I tremble in the presence of her corpse.
Look here—look here—upon this stiffening body!
Its face convulsed, cries out "a murderer!"
[*He flings himself down.*
Sexton. Manslaughter at the worst. There was no murder.
Frank. He heeds us not—lost in the agony
Of his remorse. A more compassionate spirit—
One more averse to the shedding of man's blood,
Yet of his own more prodigal, never graced
The name of seaman.
Priest. Shall we drop the coffin
Into the grave? The hour has come at last!
Art thou prepared to hear the funeral service?
Or wilt thou go behind that tomb and wait——
Wal. The funeral service is most beautiful,
And I can listen to it with the tears
Of a resigned sorrow. I remember
The day before I bade a last farewell
To her who is in heaven—we did partake
Together of the body of our Lord.
As we were walking homewards from the church,

With eyes where a sublime devotion smiled,
My mother looked at me, and gently whispered,
"Whate'er may be thy doom, I feel resigned;
And if *I am not* when my son returns,
Recall to mind this blessèd sacrament,
And think of me with Christ."
Magd. Lean on my heart,
For now the trial comes.
[*The coffin descends into the grave.*
Frank. Fling, fling the earth
Less rudely on her coffin! Magdalene!
See how it disappears! O final close
To sunny years of joy and happiness!
All perished in that dull and hideous sound!
Magd. No mortal ever led a happier life.
Her husband died, and she was sorrowful,—
But misery ne'er disturbed her soul serene,
That like a place of worship aye was husht
By day and night,—or with the voice of hymns
Singing most sweetly to the ear of Heaven.
Frank. I wonder not so much that she hath died,
As that a soul so perfect should have lived
So long in this sad world.—My little William,
Buried in all thy beauty—fare thee well!
Thank God! I never said an unkind word
To the sweet infant! Tears were in his eyes
When last I went to sea—and when I said
That I would bring him home the loveliest shells,
He smiled and wept. His face is smiling now
Far, far down in the darkness of the grave.
[*They all kneel down around the grave.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

The PRIEST *and* WILMOT *walking in a Square of the City.—Evening after the funeral of* FRANKFORT'S *mother.*

Wil. How sweetly have I felt the evening-calm
Come o'er the tumult of the busy day
In a great city! when the silent stars

Stole out so gladsome through the dark-blue heavens,
All undisturbed by any restless noise
Sent from the domes and spires that lay beneath,
Hushed as the clouds of night.

Priest. Even now 'tis so.
Didst thou e'er see a more resplendent moon?
A sky more cloudless—thicker set with stars?

Wil. The night is silent—silent was the day.
But now methinks that sky's magnificence
Darkeneth the desolation on the earth!
Even such the silence of a beautiful sea
Rolling o'er a thousand wrecks.

Priest. Let us sit down
Upon this seat, beneath its sheltering trees;
And if my soul can face the fearful things
Which it has seen and suffered, thou shalt hear
How a whole city perished—a whole city!
For, walking on the shore, we rightly call
The ocean calm, though distant waves be breaking
With melancholy dash against the rocks.

Wil. Fit place it is for such wild colloquy!
These empty houses, and that half-built spire,
Standing with all its idle scaffolding. . . . .

Priest. I see a thousand sights thou canst not see,
Glimmering around me—confusèd sights of woe
Mingling in the train of joy and happiness.
Sweet lovely children all around my feet
Are sporting—for this wide square was the playground
Where the bright families of prosperous men
Walked in the sunshine with their fairy dresses,
Laughing 'mid the flowers!—O many a slow-paced hearse
I see—and little coffins borne along
Beneath some solitary mourner's arm.
Mixed are these images of life and death!
For while I muse upon the silent face
Of one dead infant, crowds of living spirits
Come singing by—and though I see a coffin,
They see it not, but glide with sunny feet
O'er the black pall, then disappear for ever.

Wil. Came it on a sudden?

Priest. Like a thunder-peal
One morn a rumour turned the city pale;
And the tongues of men, wild-staring on each other,
Uttered with faltering voice one little word,
"The Plague!" Then many heard within their dreams

At dead of night a voice foreboding woe,
And rose up in their terror, and forsook
Homes, in the haunted darkness of despair
No more endurable. As thunder quails
Th' inferior creatures of the air and earth,
So bowed the Plague at once all human souls,
And the brave man beside the natural coward
Walked trembling. On the restless multitude,
Thoughtlessly toiling through a busy life,
Nor hearing in the tumult of their souls
The ordinary language of decay,
A voice came down that made itself be heard,
And they started from delusion when the touch
Of Death's benumbing fingers suddenly
Swept off whole crowded streets into the grave.
Then rose a direful struggle with the Pest!
And all the ordinary forms of life
Moved onwards with the violence of despair.
Wide flew the crowded gates of theatres,
And a pale frightful audience, with their souls
Looking in perturbation through the glare
Of a convulsive laughter, sat and shouted
At obscene ribaldry and mirth profane.
There yet was heard parading through the streets
War-music, and the soldier's tossing plumes
Moved with their wonted pride. O idle show
Of these poor worthless instruments of death,
Themselves devoted! Childish mockery!
At which the Plague did scoff, who in one night
The trumpet silenced and the plumes laid low.
As yet the Sabbath-day—though truly fear
Rather than piety filled the house of God—
Received an outward homage. On the street
Friends yet met friends, and dared to interchange
A cautious greeting—and firesides there were
Where still domestic happiness survived
'Mid an unbroken family; while the soul,
In endless schemes to overcome the Plague,
In art, skill, zeal, in ruth and charity
Forgot its horrors, and oft seemed to rise
More life-like 'mid the ravages of death.
But soon the noblest spirits disappeared,
None could tell whither—and the city stood
Like a beleagured fortress, that hath lost
The flower of its defenders. Then the Plague

Stormed, raging like a barbarous conqueror,
And hopeless to find mercy, every one
Fell on his face, and all who rose again
Crouched to the earth in suppliant agony.

Wil. Father! how mournful every Sabbath-day
To miss some well-known faces! to behold
The congregation weekly thinned by death,
And empty seats with all their Bibles lying
Covered with dust.

Priest. Ay—even the house of God
Was open to the Plague. Amid their prayers
The kneelers sickened, and most deadly-pale
Rose up with sobs,—and beatings of the heart
That far off might be heard, a hideous knell
That ne'er ceased sounding till the wretches died.
Sometimes the silent congregation sat
Waiting for the priest, then stretched within his shroud.
Or when he came, he bore within his eyes
A trouble that disturbed, and read the service
With the hollow voice of death.

Wil. Where was the king?
The nobles, and the judges of the land?

Priest. They left the city. Whither—none inquired.
Who cares now for the empires of the earth,
Their peerage or their monarchs? Kingly ones
Sit unobserved upon their regal seats,
And the soul looks o'er ocean, earth, and air,
Heedless to whom its fields or waves belong,
So that there were some overshadowing grove
Central amid a mighty continent,
Or sacred island in the healthful main,
Where men might be transported in a thought
Far from the wild dominion of the Plague.
Now He is monarch here—nor mortal brow
Durst wear a crown within the fatal sweep
Of his long bony arm.

Wil. He loves the silence
Of an unpeopled reign.

Priest. Once at noonday
Alone I stood upon a tower that rises
From the centre of the city. I looked down
With awe upon that world of misery;
Nor for a while could say that I beheld
Aught save one wide gleam indistinctly flung
From that bewildering grandeur: Till at once

The objects all assumed their natural form,
And grew into a City stretching round
On every side, far as the bounding sky.
Mine eyes first rested on the squares that lay
Without one moving figure, with fair trees
Lifting their tufted heads unto the light,
Sweet, sunny spots of rural imagery
That gave a beauty to magnificence.
Silent as nature's solitary glens
Slept the long streets—and mighty London seemed,
With all its temples, domes, and palaces,
Like some sublime assemblage of tall cliffs
That bring down the deep stillness of the heavens
To shroud them in the desert. Groves of masts
Rose through the brightness of the sun-smote river,
But all their flags were struck, and every sail
Was lowered. Many a distant land had felt
The sudden stoppage of that mighty heart.
Then thought I that the vain pursuits of man
Possessed a semblance of sublimity,
Thus suddenly o'erthrown; and as I looked
Down on the courts and markets, where the soul
Of this world's business once roared like the sea,
That sound within my memory strove in vain,
Yet with a mighty power, to break the silence
That like the shadow of a troubled sky
Or moveless cloud of thunder, lay beneath me,
The breathless calm of universal death.

Wil. I feel all fears for my own worthless self
Vanish at thy voice—but it grows tremulous—
I now will hear no more. I know not why
My soul thus longs to feast itself on terror—
Last night I saw enough. O that churchyard!
That madman's dance!

Priest. My voice is tremulous,
For I shall never see fourscore again.
But I can speak to thee about the Plague
That rages round us, with as calm a soul
As if a hundred years had passed away
Since yonder Pest-house heard the groans and shrieks
Of more than mortal agony.

Wil. A Pest-house!
O dreadful habitation! I beheld it,
As if in silence standing tenantless.
List! list! what fearful cries! They will burst the walls,

And issue forth a ghost-like company
Into the frightened air. Now—now—'tis silent!
As if in that one shriek they all had perished.
Priest. Let not thy spirit penetrate its walls.
Our Saviour pities it.
Wil. And who will go
Into such tomb-like building filled with horror?
Priest. Ay! 'tis a dreadful mansion, standing there
So black! as if the very walls did know
The agony within. Yet hither come
The children of despair and poverty,
Who, baring bosoms yellow with Plague-spots
Implore admittance, and with hollow voice
Do passionately vow their gratitude,
If suffered to lay down their rending heads
On the straw pallets—so that skilful men
May visit them, even when the wretches say
They have no hope. Poor souls! perhaps they die
In mitigated agony at last;
But when a ghost-like shadow enters there,
It sees the sun no more.
Wil. Didst thou ever pray
Within that fearful tabernacle?
Priest. Yes!
'Tis but two nights ago I thither went
To minister the sacrament. I heard
A hideous din before I reached the door—
And entering I beheld the ghastly patients
Walking tumultuously throughout the room,
Some seemingly in anger—all the rest
In mute despair. There lay the attendants dead!
And thirst had come upon that pale-faced crew,
Who gasped, and made wild motions with their hands,
When in their parched mouths prayers or curses died.
Wil. It was most horrible.
Priest. But I have witnessed
A sight more hideous still. The Plague broke out
Like a raging fire within the darksome heart
Of a huge madhouse; and one stormy night
As I was passing by its iron gates,
With loud crash they burst open, and a troop
Of beings all unconscious of this world,
Possessed by their own fearful phantasies,
Did clank their chains unto the troubled moon
Fast rolling through the clouds. Away they went

Across the glimmering square! some hurriedly
As by a whirlwind driven, and others moving
Slow—step by step—with melancholy mien,
And faces pale in idiot-vacancy.
For days those wild-eyed visitors were seen
Shrieking—or sitting in a woeful silence,
With withered hands, and heaps of matted hair!
And they all died in ignorance of the Plague
That freed them from their cells.—

Wil. Do none recover
Whom the Plague strikes?

Priest. Not one in many thousands.
Yet two such wretches have I chanced to see,
And they are living still—far better dead!
For they have lost all memory of the past,
All feeling of the future. Their own names
They know not—nor that they are human beings.
Like images of stone there do they sit,
When all around is agony; or laugh,
As if their features only were convulsed,
In the absence of all soul! Ay, long and loud
The laughter is of those stone-images,
Sitting unmoved with their glazed steadfast eyes!
And none can tell why the poor wretches laugh
Who know not how to weep.

Wil. How many children
Must have died in beauty and in innocence
This fatal summer!

Priest. Many sweet flowers died!
Pure innocents! they mostly sank in peace.
Yet sometimes it was misery to hear them
Praying their parents to shut out the Plague;
Nor could they sleep alone within their beds,
In fear of that dread monster. Childhood lost
Its bounding gladsomeness—its fearless glee—
And infants of five summers walked about
With restless eyes, or by their parents' sides
Crouched shuddering, for they ever heard them speaking
Of death, or saw them weeping—no one smiled.

Wil. Hath not the summer been most beautiful,
'Mid all this misery?

Priest. A sunny season!
What splendid days, what nights magnificent
Passed in majestic march above the City,
When all below was agony and death!

"O peaceful dwellers! in yon silent stars,
Burning so softly in their happiness!"
Our souls exclaimed,—"unknown inhabitants
Of unknown worlds! no misery reaches you,
For bliss is one with immortality!"
The very river as it flowed along
Appeared to come from some delightful land
Unknown unto the Plague, and hastening on
To join the healthful ocean, calmly smiled,
A privileged pilgrim through the realms of death.
Yea! in the sore disturbance of men's souls
They envied the repose of lifeless things!
And the leafy trees that graced the city squares,
Bright with the dews of morning, they seemed blest!
On them alone the untainted air of heaven
Shed beauty and delight—all round them died.
London alone, of all the world seemed curst.
O happy spots in country—or in town!
'Mid savage wilds—or dark and noisome streets—
Cut off from human intercourse—or haunted
By vice and sorrow, penury and guilt,
Ye seemed to all a blessèd Paradise,
Whither on wings of rapture they would fly,
Nor ever leave you more—for nature groans
"Where the Plague is not, there dwells happiness."

Wil. Dreadful indeed, to think how months and months
Have passed, and still are passing, without hope.

Priest. In churchyards, not in houses, it did seem
As if the people lived. They haunted there.
It was, you well may think, a woeful sight
In every burial-ground to see the grave-stones
Blackened o'er with persons, sitting night and day,
Bewailing their lost friends. But sadder still,
Ere long to see the self-same tombstones bare,
Telling how few at last were left to weep.
Sometimes I take my solitary stand
In one of those wide churchyards. Onwards pass
A multitude of faces recognised
Dimly, as beings vanished from this world:
Till, as I gaze upon them, memory
Disowns the wild creation of my brain,
And the image of those countless myriads,
Some strange procession seems of unknown creatures
On some unknown occasion moving by,

And cloud-like disappearing from my soul,
A shifting pageant journeying endless on!
Wil. And all immortal souls! sent from this world
As by a breath! like insects vanishing
On a sudden, when a breeze comes o'er the silence
Of a sultry summer-noon!—
Priest. What meets thine eyes?
Wil. Lo! yonder Frankfort walking toward us.
Is there not something wild in his appearance?
I trust that all is well with Magdalene.
Alas! should she be dead!
Priest. 'Tis for himself
I fear that we must weep. That devious pace,
Now stopping on a sudden—and now hurried,
As by a raging wind against the will . . . . .
I tremble to behold it—for the Pest
Oft dallies thus with its delirious victims.
And yet some agitation of the mind . . . . .
(*Wilmot goes up to Frankfort as he is passing by distractedly without noticing them.*)
Wil. Companion—messmate—friend—best, dearest friend,
Wilt thou not speak to us?
Frank. Hoist out the barge—
My crew will pull her through the roaring surf.
I have a mother dying of the Plague . . . . .
Wil. Sweet friend! look, look around! O misery!
His mind is overthrown.
Frank. Say who art thou
That glarest so upon me with thine eyes?
Hadst thou a brother once?
Wil. My name is Wilmot.
Frank. Wilmot? Methinks I know thee! Wilmot!
Wilmot!
Wil. I owe my life to thee.
Frank. O merciful God!
A roaring whirlwind hurries off my soul—
I surely feel these stones beneath my feet;
Houses are standing round me—yet even now,
If ever sailor trod upon a deck,
I was on board the Thunderer. What dark building
Towers yonder like a cloud? Is it a mad-house?
No irons on my hands . . . . O chain me—chain me,
In mercy, to one steadfast place of earth,
Nor drive me onwards like a heaving wave
Over the midnight sea.

Priest. Touch this grey head!
Frank. Old man! thou hast a kind and gentle look—
Then tell me this, and I will bless thee for it.
Did a fair maiden come on board to-day,
Calling herself, with a low mournful voice,
Magdalene Lambert? Did she ask for me
With that low mournful voice, and hath she gone
Weeping away because she found me not?
Drest is she all in white, as Poets feign
The angel Innocence—and when she speaks . . . .
Wilmot, I know thee now—hath something dreadful
Fallen on my head—or am I in a fever,
And raving here with a distempered brain?
Priest. We are indeed thy friends! Look at this hair
Which I am wearing close unto my heart
For thy dear mother's sake. Behold how softly
The silver-linèd auburn doth repose
Amid the sunshine of sweet William's ringlets.
[*Frankfort falls on his neck and weeps.*
Frank. Conduct me home—home—home—whate'er I say.
But look not so . . . . O, ye dim ghastly faces,
I know ye not . . . . I am your prisoner . . . .
Lead, lead me hence, and chain me in my cell.
Priest (*to Wilmot*). Let us conduct him home! Prepare thy soul
For what this night may happen to thy friend,
For death is in his face.

SCENE II.

MAGDALENE *seen lying asleep on a couch*—ISABEL *and a Young Girl sitting beside her.*

Isabel. Didst thou e'er see so beautiful a face?
Lo! how it smiles through sleep! Even in her dreams
Her soul is at some work of charity.
Child. May I go softly up, and kiss her cheek?
O why is it so pale?
Isabel. 'Twas always so.
Child. I thought that paleness was a mark of grief.
My mother's face was always deadly pale;

But then she often wept—I know not why.
This Lady must be happy.
Isabel. She awakes.
Child. Perhaps that kiss disturbed her.
Isabel (*to Magdalene, who awakes*). Magdalene!
Thou scarcely seem'st to recollect this child.
'Tis she who followed thee from that house of death:
Look here—her small hands have already learned
To serve her gracious mistress; and this table
With such refreshments as thy need requires
They spread—an orphan's gratitude has blest them.
Magd. Wilt thou go hundreds of long weary miles,
Carried thou know'st not where, along with me
And that kind girl? A sister of our own
In a far distant land thou then wilt be,
And all day run about green sunny hills
With little snow-white lambs, while happy birds
Sing to thee from their nests among the broom.
Child. I would go with thee to a land of ice
And everlasting snow.
Magd. How prone to love
Is the pure sinless soul of infancy!
Child. My father—mother—brothers—sisters—all
Are dead! yet, Lady! when I hear thee speak,
I must be happy in spite of all the tears
That gush into mine eyes. My mother stood
Close to my pillow last night in a dream,
And bade me weep no more, for that an angel
Had folded over me her heavenly wings.
I woke—and there wert thou! at my bedside,
With these delightful smiles.
Magd. O Isabel!
Of all the mournful—sad—affecting things
That sorrow meets with in a world of sorrow,
The saddest sure those smiles of happiness,
Those sudden starts of uncontrollable glee,
That, like the promptings of a different nature,
Assail the heart of childhood 'mid its grief,
And turn its tears to rapture. Beauteous beings!
Hanging in the air 'twixt joy and misery!
Now like the troubled sea-birds wildly wailing
Through the black squall;—and now upon the billows
Alighting softly with the gleams of light,
They float in beauty of a fearless calm.
Isabel. Why so profound a sigh?

Magd. A deadly pain
Even at that moment struck into my heart.
A sudden fear disturbs me—look on my face—
Seest thou aught wild and strange within my eyes?
Fear not to speak the truth.

Isabel. O nought I see
Within these eyes but a meek tender light
Softer than swimming tears—and on thy face
The same pale beauty lies by all beloved
Even when thou wert a child—a breathing paleness
More touching than the cheeks so rosy-red
Of other children—nothing else see I.

Magd. O shame! I feel the tears upon my cheek,
I weep that I must die. O days and nights
Past on my knees beside the bed of death,
Have ye been all in vain! I shudder at death
Even as this child would do—Most mournful weakness!

Child. I would not fear to die within your arms.

Magd. Bring me yon little mirror here—sweet child!
And as you come with it, look in and see
As fair a face as ever Innocence
Put on to gladden her own gazing soul!

(*The Child gives the looking-glass to Magdalene, who after a single glance continues.*)

One look into that glass revealed my fate.
I wish not to deceive my Isabel.
I feel that I am dying.

Isabel (*falling on her knees*). Merciful God!
Let the cup of death pass from her holy lips.

Magd. One momentary pang when torn from earth!
I am resigned.

Isabel. O last night's awful scene
Hath overcome thy body and thy soul.
Both are disquieted—but both ere long
Will wake to peace.—Assist me, Margaret,
And we two, soft and silent as a dream,
Will lay her on that bed. How feels my mistress?

[*They support her to bed.*

Magd. Too well am I acquainted with the Plague,
And all its fatal symptoms. I beheld
The slumb'rous weight upon my eyes, the dim
Blue shade that never more must leave my cheeks—
My lips are touched by death—before the hour
Of earliest morning—the small midnight hour,—
O Heaven protect my faithful Isabel,

And waft her safe, as on an angel's wing,
To that sweet Lake which I must see no more!
Isabel. This world at once is darkened.
Magd. Frankfort! come,
Or thy sweet voice will all be lost on me!—
Last night I dreamt of death and burial:
The Plague had stricken me in my troubled sleep!
Look here—death-tokens on my breast!
[*Isabel rushes into her arms and kisses her bosom.*
Isabel These kisses
Will cure my agony! O savage death!
May not the touch of that angelic bosom
Win o'er to pity thy relentless soul!
Alas! that mortal blueness hath been spread
By the chill air of the grave!
Magd. Kiss—kiss me not.
Isabel. Till death come from thy bosom—I will kiss thee.
Child. Lady! I hear a soft tap at the door.
Magd. Then open it, my little fearful maid,
For none but friends come here.
(*Enters the Old Priest.*)
Priest. What! all in tears!
Isabel. O sir! look here!—look here!
Priest. My holy child!
O ghost-like now thy more than mortal beauty!
Canst thou not raise thy head?
Magd. O pray for me.
Priest. Daughter! thy name is well-beloved in heaven.
There hath been something in thy destiny
Above our human nature, and thy soul
Conspicuous, like a never-setting star,
Hath shone o'er all the city—shedding joy
And consolation. There is need of thee
In this most wicked and afflicted world,
And therefore do I trust with holy awe
That death's dark shadow will pass over thee,
And thou in undimmed beauty reappear!
—If so the will of God!
Magd. Thou must pray for me,
While yet I hear and understand thy prayers.
Too well thou thinkest of me—I am weak
In all my being—weaker far than many
Who have died unpraised—unhallowed and unwept.
O sinful pride! and base hypocrisy!

If in the deep prostration of my soul
I did not so confess. My earthly nature,
With eager visitings to all unknown,
Oft haunted me, when I was kneeling down
In prayer with others—holding up the head
From which all sense was parting. Oh! my pity
Was oft imperfect—almost insincere!
Yet God may in his boundless love accept
My feeble efforts. Faith at least is mine.
Oh! were that gone I should be poor indeed.

Priest. Daughter! in happier mood thou couldst not die.

Magd. O father! when I lived in happiness,
I drank the cup of joy, and often failed
To thank the hand that gave it. Years passed by,
And still I grew and flourished like a flower,
Unconscious of the sun that blesseth it.
But now the sadness of ingratitude
Disturbeth me, when I have need of comfort.

Priest. God is well satisfied with innocence.
The pure soul best doth prove its gratitude
By acquiescence to his will supreme,—
Calm thoughts and meek desires,—unsought-for bliss
Coming to youth from all the points of heaven,—
And above all, by natural piety,
That sees love, beauty, and delight on earth,
And on their wings mounts every happy man
Up to the gates of heaven. Thy joyful years
Are not forgotten by the Power that gave them,
And not one virtuous momentary thought
E'er stirred thy heart that is not registered
In the book of mercy—therefore calm thy soul.

Magd. I cannot doubt the language of these eyes,
So solemn—saint-like!—O were Frankfort happy!
I now could follow death into the grave
As joyfully as in the month of May
A lamb glides after its soft-bleating mother
Into a sunny field of untrod dew.
Heaven will protect my Isabel! Thou too.
My well-beloved friend of yesterday,
Wilt have a gentle father. Dry thy tears—
Yet youth will dry them for thee. If my Frankfort—
[*She starts suddenly up in bed.*
Take—take away these hands before thy face
And tell me in one word—"is he alive?"

Priest. He is alive—but his perturbèd soul
Is tost and driven throughout a ghastly dream.
Magd. Is he alone—in his insanity?
O that the Plague would prey upon our bodies,
But leave the spirit free!
Priest. Wilmot is with him.
Magd. Eternal bliss be with that fearless friend!
Priest It may not be the Plague.
Magd. It is the Plague.
I know it is the Plague—and he will die.
Isabel. O lady! rise not up.
(MAGDALENE *rises from bed and stands in the midst of them.*)
Magd. What! remain here?
In what I say I must not be opposed.
You love me—therefore in your love be silent.
I go to Frankfort—I shall not fall down
In the street before I reach him. I feel strong,
And could walk many miles. Come, Isabel.
Let me kiss the book of God before I go.—
Farewell, my little room! Thou art indeed
A calm and peaceful cell—and I have passed
Many still hours of awful happiness
Within thy lonely twilight. Now farewell!
I leave thee for a lodging calmer yet.

SCENE III.

FRANKFORT *lying on a bed in the house of his deceased Mother.*—WILMOT *watching beside him.*

Frank. Go upon deck, and tell me if thou seest
The signal flying for close line of battle.
Does our good vessel lead the van to-day?
Or will these tame and cautious Hollanders
Still keep a lee-shore on their skulking bows?
Wil. Look on me, Frankfort—this is all a dream.
Frank. No time for jesting. Tell the old lieutenant,
That a braver seaman never trod the deck,
But that I fight my ship myself to-day;
She is his when I am killed.

Wil. Look at this bed—
These curtains pictured o'er with little birds
Sporting in a grove of Spring. Thy cabin, Frankfort,
Hath no such peaceful garniture. Look here,
We have no windows like to these at sea.
Frankfort, thou art a right good seaman still,
And in thy raving fits must needs be fighting
With these poor Dutchmen.—Prithee let them rest
In their flat-bottomed vessels for one day.
—Ha! thou art smiling!

Frank. Yes! I well may smile
At my poor wandering soul. Wilmot! a ship
Doth on the ocean hold the raging winds
At her command—queen-like as doth become her.
But I am driven along a glimmering sea,
And know not how to bear up 'gainst the storm.

Wil. Thank God, you recognise your friend at last.

Frank. I know thee now—but whether the next moment
Thy face may seem to me what now I think it,
God only knows. It is a dreadful state,
When, like a horse, by lightning scared to madness,
One's soul flies with him wheresoe'er it will,
And still one feels that he is hurried on,
But cannot stop—in terror hurried on—
Away—away—away—a frightful race!

Wil. Thou may'st remember what vagaries I
Once fell into, when that fierce tropic sun
Did smite my brain with fever. Then, heaven bless me!
I was far more pacific in my dreams,
And fancied all the world in love with me.

Frank. What fool hath brought our vessel to an anchor?
Order the master down—by heaven, the Fleet
Will laugh us all to scorn. Hark, a broadside!
We are a long league in the admiral's wake
While he is closing with the enemy.
Hoist every inch of canvass—I will soon
Recover my lee-way.

(*He leaps out of bed with great violence, and falls senseless on the floor. After a long fainting-fit, he exclaims*),

Where am I, Wilmot?—
Where art thou, my pure spirit—where is Magdalene?

Wil. She and the old Priest will be here anon.

Frank. Is this a stormy night?

Wil. A perfect calm.

Frank. The noise of thunder and tempestuous waves
Is raging in my soul.
Wil. 'Tis all a dream.
Frank. O hold me—hold me fast—keep, keep me here.
I am on board a ship, and she is sinking
Down to the very bottom of the sea.
She bounds up from the abyss—and o'er the billows
Rolls manageless—and now—now water-logged
Is settling—settling—till she sink like lead,
Never to rise again! Hush—hush, my crew!
In shipwreck fearless as in battle—hush!
Let us sink in silence to eternity.
Wil. On good dry land are we, my boy! at last,
Though yet the rolling of our gallant ship
Is loth to leave our brains. Smile to me, messmate.
Frank. Have we been travelling o'er foreign lands,
And met adventures perilous and wild?
Thou seem'st to look on me with asking eyes!
Listen, and I will tell a fearful story:
But interrupt me not—for like a flood
That hath been all night raging 'mid the mountains,
My soul descends from its wild solitude,
And must sweep on till all its troubled thoughts
Have from their headlong fury found repose.
Thou wilt not interrupt me?
Wil. No! my friend!
Frank. It seemeth many many years ago
Since I remember aught about myself;
Nor can I tell why I am lying here.
Before I fell into this dream, I saw
A most magnificent and princely square
Of some great city. Sure it was not London?
No—no—the form and colour of those clouds
So grim and dismal never horrified
The beautiful skies of England, nor such thunder
Ever so growled throughout my native clime.
It was the capital city of a kingdom
Lying unknown amid unvoyaged seas,
Where towers and temples of an Eastern structure
With airy pomp bewildered all my soul.
When gazing on them, I was struck at once
With blindness and decay of memory,
And a heart-sickness almost like to death.
A deep remorse for some unacted crime
Fell on me. There, in dizziness I stood,

Contrite in conscious innocence—repentant
Of some impossible nameless wickedness
That bore a dread relation unto me.
A ghastly old man—and a noble youth,
Yet with fierce eyes that smiled with cruelty,
Came up to me all lost in wonderment
What spots of blood might mean beneath my feet
All over a bed of flowers. The old man cried,
"Where is thy mother, impious parricide!
Ha! thou hast buried her beneath these flowers."
The young man laughed, and kicked the flowers aside,
And there indeed my murdered mother lay
With her face up to heaven! imploring mercy
For her unnatural son. Then the old man
Touched my cold shoulder with his icy fingers,
And direful pains assailed me suddenly—
Burnings and shiverings—flashings from my eyes—
And dizzy blindness whirling round my soul—
And arrowy sharpness tingling through my bones—
Until I wept in utter agony.
And all the while I saw my mother's corpse
Lying in peace before her frantic son,
And knew that I in wrath had murdered her.
More dreadful was my doom than if my hand
Indeed had ta'en her life—for sure in sleep
The soul hath a capacity of horror
Unknown to waking hours. No fettered wretch,
Dragged on a sledge to execution,
E'er felt such horrid pangs as then stirred up
My spirit with remorseful agony.
O Wilmot! Wilmot! lead me to my mother—
That I with yearning soul may pour my kisses
O'er the dear frame I murdered in my sleep.

Wil. Yesterday morning in this very bed
Your mother died a calm and peaceful death,
Blessing her son for all his piety.

Frank. O lying Fiend! Thou art the very youth
That shook the bloody flowers before my face,
And from the land of dreams hast followed me
In ghostly persecution to the light
Of this our upper world! Say! where is he,
The grey-haired Fiend, in holy vestments clad?
O Christ! so wild a likeness in his wrath
Of my best earthly friend!—upon my knees
I cry to thee—I shriek unto thy soul

Art, art thou Wilmot?—Let me see thine eyes—
Oh! they are filled with tears! my brother weeps!
And well he may—for such a wretch as I am
God ne'er before abandoned to despair.
Wil. Thy soul will climb into the light at last,
Out of its haunted darkness—fear it not.
Frank. The Plague! the Plague! the Plague! did she not die
Of the Plague? who saw her buried? No one—no one.—
Drive off that madman from my mother's grave,
And let that angel, all arrayed in light,
Look down with her sunlike face into the pit;
Her smile will make it heaven. O Magdalene!
Thy spirit comes down from its rest on high
To glorify my mother's funeral.
Yes! What on earth we love and call it Pity,
In heaven we worship by a holier name,
Mercy! The seraph whom our Saviour loves.
Wil. She is alive. No tears need fall for him,
Who, waking from a dream so steeped in horror,
Hath such an one to bless him when he wakes.
Thy Magdalene lives.
Frank. O heartless mockery!
Why camest thou here to talk of Magdalene?
Thou art leagued with all the world to murder me,
With that sweet name too beauteous to be borne.
I know that she is dead, and am resigned.
But let her name die too—its syllables
Flame on my brain in letters formed of fire,
A burning name, all, all that now remains.
Wil. O I would die, so that my friend had peace.
Frank. O Wilmot! Pity him the Plague hath stricken!
He knows not what he says. O pity me!
For I have undergone such mortal pains!
Whether in dreams or in a waking hell
I know not—but my soul hath suffered them—
And they have left me powerless as a sail
Hanging in the breathless calm. But list! I hear
Soft footsteps pattering all around my head—
Are they living feet?
Wil. Behold thy Magdalene.

(*Enter* MAGDALENE, PRIEST, ISABEL, *and* CHILD.)

Frank. I see a group of faces known in youth—
All but the face of that delightful child—

And she admitted to such company
Must be what she appears—unknown to sin.
(MAGDALENE *kneels down by the bed-side and looks on* FRANKFORT.)
Magd. Say that thou know'st me, and I shall die happy.
Frank. Magdalene! for I will call thee by that name!
Thou art so beautiful!
Magd. Enough—enough!
Frank. O Magdalene! why I am lying here,
And why so many melancholy faces
Are looking all at me, and none but me,
I now must never know. I see the tears
Which all around do shed are meant for me;
But none will tell me why they thus should weep.
Has some disgrace befallen me? One word,
One little word from thee will make all plain—
For oh! a soul with such a heavenly face,
Must live but in relieving misery!
Magd. Disgrace and Frankfort's name are far asunder,
As bliss from bale. O press my hand, sweet friend!
Its living touch may wake thee from thy dream
Of unsubstantial horrors. Magdalene
Hath come to die with thee—even in thy arms!
Frank. O music well known to my rending brain!
It breathes the feeling of reality
O'er the dim world that hath perplexed my soul.
All, all again is clear—I know myself—
Magdalene and Wilmot—Isabel and thee,
Belovèd old man!—what may be the name
Of this small creature?
Child. Margaret Rivington.
Frank. God bless thy sweet simplicity.
Magd. Thy face
Is all at once spread over with a calm
More beautiful than sleep, or mirth, or joy!
I am no more disconsolate. We shall die
Like two glad waves, that, meeting on the sea
In moonlight and in music, melt away
Quietly 'mid the quiet wilderness!
Frank. Sweet image to a sailor!—How my soul
Enjoys this quiet after its despair!
O might I lie for ever on the bed
Of sickness—so that such dear comforters
Might sit beside me! singing holy airs,
Or talking to each other, or to me,

Even to the very moment of my death.
The sweetest voice among so many sweet
My Magdalene's ! and I the happy cause
Of all such tender looks and melting tones.

Magd. Frankfort, hast thou looked upon thy Magdalene's face ?

Frank. (*starting up*). O God ! remove that colour from her cheek—
That woeful glimmer of mortality !
Who brought thee hither from thy distant room ?

Magd. On foot I came, between two loving friends.
I felt not wearied then—but now I feel
That I can walk no more. Let me lie down
And die, as we two will be buried
Close to each other's side.

Frank. O cruel friends,
To let thee walk so far with that pale face,
Weak as thou art, to see a dying wretch
Like me !

(*They raise up* MAGDALENE, *and lay her on the bed beside* FRANKFORT.)

Magd. I hope thou feel'st no cruel pain ?

Frank. Thy soft white spotless bosom, like the plumes
Of some compassionate angel, meets my heart !
And all therein is quiet as the snow
At breathless midnight.

Magd. No noise in thy brain ?

Frank. A sweet mild voice is echoing far away
In the remotest regions of my soul.
'Tis clearer now—and now again it dies,
And leaves a silence smooth as any sea,
When all the stars of heaven are on its breast.

Magd. We go to sleep, and shall awake with God.

Frank. Sing me one verse of a hymn before I die.
Any of those hymns you sang long, long ago
On Sabbath evenings ! Sob not so, my Magdalene.

(MAGDALENE *sings.*)

Of Souls I see a glorious show
Beyond life's roaring flood !
With raiment spotless as the snow,
Washed white in Jesus' blood.

His gentle hand their couch hath spread
By many a living stream—
No sigh is drawn—no tear is shed—
One bright—eternal dream !

Frank. I cannot see thee—but I hear thy voice
Breathing assurance of the world to come.
I feel that I am dying—sinking down
As through soft-yielding waters murmuring round me,
Noiseless as air, and almost to be breathed.
It is the calm before the approach of death.
Kiss—kiss me, Magdalene! I am sinking down—
Wilmot, farewell—old man—kind Isabel—
Kiss—kiss me! . . . .

Wil. (*to Priest*). Death was in that long-drawn sigh.

Priest. Our friend is gone.

Magd. Yes! I have kissed his lips,
And they are breathless. Let me lay my head
On thy unbeating bosom. O sweet hair,
In stillness shadowing that delightful face
Where anger never came!—I see a smile
No living thing may borrow from the dead!

Priest. She is composed.

Magd. Yes, father! I am blest.
This were a sight on which despair might look
With stony eyes and groan herself to madness.
But I am dying—therefore o'er the dead
Weep only tears of joy.

Isabel. But o'er the living!
Oh!

Magd. A drowsiness falls on me. Isabel,
Let me sleep in Frankfort's arms. I shall awake
Refreshed and happy in the approach of death,
And whisper to thy ear my farewell words.

Priest. She falls asleep! in that most death-like trance
Let us bear Frankfort's body to the grave!
—She may recover! See her breath just moves
The ringlets on his cheek!—How lovingly
In her last sleep these white and gentle hands
Lie on his neck and breast!—Her soul is parting
Had ever lovers such a death as this?
Let us all kneel and breathe our silent prayers!

SCENE IV.

A Churchyard.—Midnight.—A Crowd of People assembled round the mouth of a huge Pit dug for the interment of the Dead.

1*st Man.* Keep back, my friends—so that each man may have
A fair view of the pit:—We all stand here
Upon a footing of equality,
And the less we crowd upon each other thus,
The better shall we see the spectacle.

2*d Man.* What think ye? Why the villain at the gate
Would have admittance-money, and stretched forth
His long lean shrivelled fingers in my face,
Half-beggar and half-robber. Lying knave!
Who said he had not drawn a sous to-night:
For in his other palm I saw the edge
Of silver monies smiling daintily.
So I pushed the hoary swindler to the wall,
And as he dropped the coin I saw no harm
In picking up some stragglers for myself.
I wonder where will imposition end,
Thus rife within the dwellings of the dead!

3*d Man.* This pit is not so wide by one good half
As that in Moorfields. Threescore men were digging
Down its dark sides for four-and-twenty hours,
Yet in one little week 'twas filled to the brim.
This is a sorry pit, and would not hold
Above five hundred full-grown corpses. Zounds!
'Tis throwing money away to buy a look
At such a miserable hole as this.

1*st Man.* I say stand back—what obstinate fool is this,
All muffled up to the eyes, with his slouched hat
Drawn o'er his face—still pressing to the brink,
As he would have the whole pit to himself
And not allow a peep to one beside?

2*d Man.* Disturb him not—perhaps he is some wretch
Maddened by the Plague, and blindly coming here
To bury himself alive, as many do.
Let him leap down; when once he feels the softness
Of the cold bodies yielding under him,
He will be right fain, if the steep walls allow,
To crawl back to his life and misery.

3*d Man.* Let's see thy face. Perhaps thou art afraid
Lest the night air may spoil its delicate beauty.
[*He lifts up the man's hat.*

Stranger. O scoff not—scoff not at a wretch like me.
My friends! I am no subject for your mirth.
My wife—my father, and four little children,
Will soon within the dead-cart be brought here,
And I must see them buried spite of laughter,
In spite of laughter, agony, or death.
—Laugh on—laugh on—for all the world is nought
But emptiness and mockery. I myself
Will join your laughter—now I fear it not.
For mirth and misery are but different names
For one delusion.—O that hideous grave
Hath sent its earthly coldness through my being,
And I feel blended with the damp black mould.
[*He rushes away to a distance, and flings himself down on a tombstone.*

3*d Man.* Didst see his face? it was a dreadful sight.
Such face I once remember to have seen
Of a chained madman howling in his cell.
Suddenly lifted from the stony floor,
It seemed all eyes—one gleaming of despair.

1*st Man.* What signifies a living maniac's face?
Have we not often seen the unsheeted dead
Reared up like troops in line against the walls?
To us at distance seemingly alive,
All standing with blotched faces, and red eyes
Unclosed, as in some agonising dream!

2*d Man.* Just round the corner of that street—even now
I stumbled on such hideous company.
The lamps burned dimly, and the tall church-tower
Rose up between me and the moon. I saw
A glimmering whiteness all along the walls
Of several silent houses—up I went—
And right before me stood the ghastly dead,
For whose grim faces no kind hand had done
The last sad office. Oh! 'twas terrible!
To recognise in those convulsèd features
Friends at whose fireside I had often sat!
And as I hurried off in shivering fear,
Methought I heard a deep and dismal groan
From that long line of mortal visages
Shudder through the deepening darkness of the street.

2*d Man.* Hark—hark!

3d Man. What hideous tolling shakes the city!
1st Man. Methinks the still air, like a sudden wave,
Heaves onward at each slow swing of that bell.
From what tower comes the sound?
2d Man. St Mary Overie's.
I know the toll! a thousand dreams of death
Come with that voice. It fills the den of night
With mortal fear, rendering the silent heavens
The dim abode of unimagined horrors.
List! every heart is beating audibly!
1st Man. Who tolls the bell at the dead hour of night?
2d Man. Perhaps no human hand.
1st Man. 'Tis said one midnight
The sexton heard a tolling from that tower,
And entering on a sudden silently
He saw a being wrapt up in a shroud
Pulling the rope with black and bony hands,
And singing all the while a hideous tune
That breathed not of this world. It turned about,
And one glance of its wild and fiery eye
Crazed the poor wretch's brain.
2d Man. Have mercy—Jesu!
Dost thou believe in ghosts?
1st Man. That midnight bell
Startleth methinks the silent world of spirits.
Who could deny, with that unearthly sound
Tolling through his brain, that something in the grave
Exists more horrible than worms and darkness!
It may be that wild dreams inhabit there,
And disembodied thoughts! Despair—remorse—
And with his stifled shrieks—Insanity!
Half-conscious all the while that the curse of God
Must be eternal, struck into the grave.
3d Man. That is my creed. Sometimes their chains are loosened:
How else account for all the sighing sounds
That oft at breathless midnight pass us by,
Wailing with more than mortal agonies?
Strange faces often have been seen at night,
Of persons long entombed; and once a Phantom
Walked to the churchyard with a funeral,
Sobbing and weeping like the Christian crowd,
When as the coffin sank, it disappeared,
And nought but dry bones lay upon the dust.
2d Man. What rumbling sound is that?

3d Man. The dead-cart comes!
'Tis heavy laden, for it moves but slowly.
It still is in the street—yet o'er the pavement
It sounds as dully as o'er trodden turf.
I have driven a hearse with one dead body in it,
And once by midnight o'er a dreary moor
With no one near me but that sheeted corpse,
Till my back felt like ice. But this dead-cart!
See yonder where its lamps, like two great eyes,
Are moving towards us. It comes silently,
For now its wheels are on the churchyard turf.

[*All make way for it as it approaches the pit.*

1st Man. The ghastly idiot-negro charioteer!
See how he brandishes around his head
A whip that in the yellow lamp-light burns
Like a fiery serpent. How the idiot laughs!
And brightens up his sable countenance,
With his white teeth, that stretch from ear to ear.
Thank God he is no Christian—only a negro.

[*The cart is emptied into the pit.*

Stranger (*leaping in*). Bury me—bury me.
1st Man. Let him have his will.
I would not venture down into that pit
To help him out for all that he is worth,
However rich he be.
2d Man. Yet 'tis a pity
That his watch, and chains, and seals (they seemed of gold),
Should thus be lost. I'll leap down instantly
And bring them up, if I'm allowed to keep them.

(*The negro when about to drive away the cart descends, and brings him up with a little dead child in his arms.*)

Stranger. I knew my infant by her shining hair!
Shining at the bottom of the dismal pit,
Even like a star in heaven. I hear her breathing!
— Feel, feel this kiss—for I have rescued thee
From being buried alive. My Emmeline,
Open thy blue eyes on thy father's heart.
There's earth upon her face—Oh! wet damp earth
On the warm rosy cheeks of innocence.
Now 'tis kissed off for ever. Why not speak?
I will carry thee home unto thy mother's bosom.
There wilt thou speak—wilt laugh and nestle there.
She thought thee dead—but thou art quite alive,
Or rising from the dead—for dead thou art not,

And must not be. Home! home! my Emmeline!
Thy mother waits our coming—home! home! home!
[*He rushes away with the dead infant in his arms.*
1*st Man.* Well, let him go.—Ha!—thanks to the kind moon,
Coming out so brightly from her tabernacle!
There is a perfect prospect of the pit
Down to the very bottom. Now again
'Tis dark as pitch. Hear! hear the crumbling earth,
How sullenly it sounds when it has reached
The ground-rock! 'Tis indeed a fearful depth!

(*A small procession enters the churchyard—Voices heard singing a dirge for the dead.*)

REVELATIONS, ch. xiv. verse 13.

I heard a voice from Heaven
Say, "Blessed is the doom
Of them whose trust is in the Lord,
When sinking to the tomb!"

The Holy Spirit spake—
And I his words repeat—
"Blessèd are they—for after toil
To mortals rest is sweet."

(*The procession advances*—WILMOT, PRIEST, *&c. bearing* FRANKFORT'S *dead body.*)

Wil. There rest a while upon this stone, dear corpse.
I with my own hands now will dig thy grave.
Oh! when that grave is filled—what solitude
All earth will seem to me!

Voice from the crowd. List to the Priest!

Priest. We all are sinful—and thy soul partook
In the frailties of our fall'n humanity.
Therefore, I pray forgiveness to thy sins
From God and Christ. But this I dare to say,
In the dread calm of this wide burial-ground,
That, far as man's heart can be known to man,
A braver, gentler, purer, loftier spirit
Ne'er walked this world of trial.—O dear youth!
Sweet boy! belovèd from thine infancy!
Methinks I see thee on thy mother's knee,
Conning thy evening prayer. Art thou the same,
That, with thy bright hair thus dishevelled,
Liest on a tombstone, dead and coffinless,
About to sink for ever from our eyes!

—One little month—and all thy earthly part
Mouldered away to nothing—darkly mixed
With a great city-churchyard's dismal mould!
Where sleep, in undistinguishable dust,
Young, old, good, wicked, beauteous and deformed,
Trodden under feet by every worthless thing
Human and brute! in dumb oblivion,
Laughed over daily by the passing crowd,
Fresh shoals of wretches toiling for this world.
—Wilmot! 'tis hard to lay into the grave
A count'nance so benign! a form that walked
But yesterday so stately o'er the earth!

Wil. Long as he lay upon his bed, he seemed
Only a beauteous being stretched in sleep,
And I could look on him. But lying there,
Shroudless and coffinless beside his grave! . . . .
——Is it religious, Father, thus to weep
O'er a dead body? sure his soul in heaven
Must smile, (how well I know his tender smile!)
To see his friends in senseless misery
Thus clinging to the dust.

Priest. His soul in heaven
Looks down with love on such a friend as thou!
Here! take a blessing with these withered hands
Laid on thy honoured head. Thou wert a friend
In the calm weather of prosperity,—
And then the beauty of friendship showed in thee,
Like a glad bark that, by her consort's side,
Moved through the music of the element,
A sunny cloud of sail. That consort sank—
And now that lonely bark throughout the gloom,
Labours with shattered masts, and sore-rent sails,
Not without glory—though she could not save!
Forgive such image—but I see before me
A living sailor and his best dead friend,
And my soul dreams of the sea.

Wil. Oh! who comes here!

(*Enter* MAGDALENE *distractedly, followed by* ISABEL *and the* CHILD.)

Magd. I heard a voice ring through my dreaming ear,
"Haste, Magdalene! to the churchyard—they are burying
Thine own beloved Frankfort!" Tell me where
Your cruel hands have laid my mariner?
He shall not lie in the cold grave to-night,
All by himself—Lo! I his bride am here,

And I will kiss his lips, even if the worm
Should be my rival. I will rest my head
Upon his breast, than icy tombstone colder!
Ay! the grave shall be my happy nuptial-bed,
Curtained with black walls of the dripping clay.
Where is he? wretches! have ye buried him?

Isabel. Oh! must I tell thee—Magdalene! to look round,
That thou mayest see thy Frankfort lying dead!
Behold thy sailor!

[MAGDALENE *flings herself down on the body.*

Magd. Art thou still on earth!
O cold, cold kisses! pale and breathless lips!
Are those sweet eyes indeed for ever closed!
—See! see! the garb in which he sailed the deep!
—Thy voyaging all is o'er—thy harbour here!
Anchored thou art in everlasting rest,
While over thee the billows of this world
Are with unheeded fury raving on.

Isabel. Hast thou one word for Isabel?

Magd. My sister!
My love for thee was perfect—Wilmot! Wilmot!
What art thou doing with thy savage spade?
Ha! digging Frankfort's grave!—They shall not bury thee!
A thing so beautiful must not be buried . . . .

[*She faints upon the body.*

Wilmot (*to the Priest*). I leave the dying Lady to your care.
My soul is strong in agony of love
And unexampled sorrow—and since I
Did undertake to dig my brother's grave,
I will go on with it, until I reach
His mother's coffin!

Voice from the crowd. God will be his help.
That one small grave—that one dead mariner—
That dying Lady—and those wondrous friends,
So calm, so lofty, yet compassionate—
Do strike a deeper awe into our souls,
A deeper human grief than yon wide pit,
With its unnumbered corpses.

Another Voice. Woe and death
Have made that Angel bright their prey at last!
But yesterday I saw her heavenly face
Becalm a shrieking room with one sweet smile!
For her, old age will tear his hoary locks,

And childhood murmur forth her holy name,
Weeping in sorrowful dreams!
Another Voice. Her soft hand closed
My children's eyes,—and when she turned to go,
The beauty of her weeping countenance
So sank into my heart, that I beheld
The little corpses with a kind of joy,
Assured by that compassionate Angel's smile
That they had gone to heaven.
Magd. (*recovering from her swoon*). 'Tis cold! cold! cold!
Colder than any living thing can bear!
—Have I been visiting my parents' grave,
And fainted on a tombstone? Who lies here?
—Frankfort, what ails thee?
Isabel. Magdalene! Magdalene!
Magd. Art thou the shadow of a blessèd friend
Still living on the earth?
Isabel. These tombstones tell . . . .
And all these pale and mortal visages . . . .
Magd. Is there a funeral?
Wilmot. Once I had a brother,
But we have come to lay him in his grave!
Magd. No more! no more!
Priest. The darkness leaves her brain!
Magd. All pain, all sorrow, and all earthly fear,
Have left me now, and ye behold me lying
In a deep joy beyond all happiness!
This corpse is beautiful, but 'tis only dust,
And with this last embrace it is forgotten,
And no more is among my dying thoughts.
Priest. How her face kindles with the parting soul!
Magd. O gracious God! how sweet! how most delightful
To fade away into eternity
With a clear soul!—So have I seen the shore—
The soft green shore of my own native lake
'Mid sunshine blended with the sleeping waters,
In unobservèd union fair and still!
O blessed lake! . . . think of me, Isabel,
When thou art walking with that happy child
Through its birch woods, or by yon whispering pines—
Farewell! that image . . . . Isabel! farewell!
Wil. So clear a voice can ne'er be that of death!
She is recovering.
Magd. Isabel! look there!

Are those my parents smiling at my side?
Fold your wings over me—gone—gone to heaven
Are the bright Seraphs!—Christ receive my soul!
[*She dies.*

Priest. An Angel's pen must write thy epitaph.

Wil. Awful seems human nature in the tears
That old age weeps.

Priest. Forgive such tears!—So young,
So beautiful amid the opening world,
Who would not weep for them!

Isabel. The world will weep,
All the wide world will weep!—I have been sitting
On a high cloud above this woeful city,
With a bright angel at my side. She falls
Down from that sunny region, and my soul
Is wandering now in helpless solitude
Through miseries once seen far below my feet.

Priest. Oh hers will be a memorable name,
Famous in this city—over all the isle
Devoutly breathed in hymns, and oft invoked
In lofty songs and odes to charity,—
Sacred to childhood in its weeping dreams,
By love—and sorrow—and pity saved for ever
From dark oblivion, like the holy name
Of tutelary Saint.

Isabel. Ay! it will live
Among her native mountains—to all hearts
Familiar music, and the holy house
Where she was born will oft be visited
By mute adorers, and its very dust,
When time hath worn the lowly walls away,
Untrod be held in endless reverence.
Not unforgotten in our shepherds' songs
The maid who far-off perished in the Plague.
The glens so well-beloved will oft repeat
The echo of her name; and all in white
An Angel will be seen to walk the valleys,
Smiling with a face too beauteous to be feared
On lonely maiden walking home at night
Across the moonlit hills.

Priest. O faithful Isabel!
Is not this churchyard now a place of peace?

Isabel. Of perfect peace. My spirit looks with eyes
Into the world to come. There Magdalene sits

With those she loved on earth. O mortal body,
In faded beauty stretched upon the dust,
I love thee still as if thou wert a soul . . . .
Priest. Friends, let us lift the body.
Isabel. In my arms,
Upon my bosom—close unto my heart
Thus do I lift my Magdalene to her grave!
I kiss her brow—her cheeks—her lips—her eyelids—
Her most delightful hair!—I twine my arms
Around her blessèd neck—cold, cold as ice!
I feel her whole frame in my sorrowful spirit.
Priest. Wilmot! assist our friend . . . . .
Wil. (*starting*). The sound of waves
Came for one moment o'er my friendless soul.
Child. O might I go to sleep within the grave
With one so beautiful! No ghost would come
To frighten me on such a breast as this.
The churchyard even at midnight would appear
A place where one might sleep with happy dreams
Where such an angel lay. O might I die
Singing the hymn last night I heard her sing,
And go with her to heaven.
Isabel. Heaven bless the child!
Yes! thou art blest in weeping innocence.
Wil. Here is the prayer-book clasped in Magdalene's hand,
Let us kneel down while thy blest voice is reading
The funeral service.
Isabel. Oh! that fatal day
On which we left our cottage! Magdalene smiled . . . .
Oh! that sweet gleam of sunshine on the lake! . . .
Priest. Are we all prepared to hear the service read?
Isabel. All. Come, thou sweet child! kneel thou at my side!
Hush! sob not—for they now are Spirits in heaven!

THE CONVICT.

PART I.

SCENE I.

A Room in a Cottage at Lea-side.—The Prisoner's Wife and a Friend sitting together in the midst of the Family.—The day on which sentence is to be pronounced.

Wife. 'Tis twelve o'clock, and no news from the City.
Oh! had he been acquitted, many hundreds
Would have been hurried hither in their joy,
Headlong into the house of misery,
To shout the tidings of salvation there.
But now that he is doomed unto the death,
They fear to bring with black and silent faces
The sentence of despair. O God! to think
That all this long interminable night,
Which I have passed in thinking on two words—
"Guilty"—"Not guilty!" like one happy moment
O'er many a head hath flown unheeded by—
O'er happy sleepers dreaming in their bliss
Of bright to-morrows—or far happier still,
With deep breath buried in forgetfulness.
O all the dismallest images of death
Did swim before my eyes! The cruel face
Of that most wicked old man, whom in youth
I once saw in the city—that wan wretch,
The public Executioner, rose up
Close by my husband's side, and in his hand
A most accursed halter which he shook

In savage mockery—and then grimly smiled,
Pointing to a scaffold with his shrivelled fingers,
Where, on a sudden, my own husband stood
Drest all in white, and with a fixèd face
Far whiter still—I felt as if in hell,
And shrieked out till my weeping children rose
In terror from their beds.

Friend. 'Twas but a dream.

Wife. No, I was broad awake—but still the vision
Stood steadfastly before me—till I sank
Upon my knees in prayer—and Jesus Christ
Had pity on me—and it came no more.

Friend. Full many a sleepless eye did weep for thee
Last night, and for thy husband. Think it not
That pity dwells but in the hearts of kindred.
Even strangers weep—they think him innocent,
And prayers from many who never saw his face,
For him have gone to heaven—they will be heard.

Wife. Oh! what are prayers, and shriekings of despair,
Or frantic outcries of insanity,
Unto the ear of the great dreadful God!
Can we believe that prayers of ours will change
The Almighty's steadfast purpose! Things like us!
Poor miserable worms!—All night I cried,
"Save, save my husband, God! O save my husband!"
But back the words returned unto my heart,
And the dead silence of the senseless walls
With horrid mockery in the darkness stood
Between me and my God.

Friend. Yet it is written,
"Ask, and it shall be given thee."

Wife. Blessèd words!
And did they come from His most holy lips
Who cannot lie?

Friend. They are our Saviour's words.

Wife. Joy, joy unto the wretched! Hear me then,
O Son of God! while near my cradled infant,
Sleeping in ignorance of its father's sorrows,
I fall down on my knees before thy face!
Hear, hear the broken voice of misery!
"Ask, and it shall be given thee!" Holy One!
I ask, beseech, implore, and supplicate,
That Thou wilt save my husband, and henceforth
Will I an altered creature walk this earth

With Thee, and none but Thee, most Holy Being,
For ever in my heart, my inmost heart.
Friend. Is not my friend already comforted?
Wife. The heavy burden of despair is lightened.
In this my hour of tribulation
My Saviour's words return upon my heart,
Like breath of Spring reviving the dead flowers
In our sweet little garden.
Friend. Heaven bless thee,
A smile is on thy cheek, a languid smile!
Wife. I know not why I smiled—a sudden gleam
Of hope did flash across me.—Hark! a footstep!
Friend. 'Tis the dog stirring on his straw.
Wife. Poor Luath!
Thy kind affectionate heart doth miss thy master.
Mary! the poor dumb creature walks about
As if some sickness wore him, always wandering
Round, round the house, and all the neighbouring fields,
Seeking the absent. He will disappear
For hours together, and come home at night
Wearied and joyless—for he has been running
No doubt o'er all the hills, and round the lochs,
Trying to find his master's well-known footsteps.
Then will he look with dim complaining eyes
Full in my face, and with a wailing whine
Goes to his straw, and there at once lies down
Without a gambol or a loving frisk
Among the little children. Many a Christian
Might take a lesson from that poor dumb creature.
—When Frank comes home—how Luath will partake
The general happiness! When Frank comes home!
What am I raving of? When Frank comes home!
That blank and weeping face too plainly says,
"That hour will never be!" Look not so black,
Unless you wish to kill me with despair.
Friend. I wished not to appear so sorrowful.
Within the silent grave my husband sleeps,
And I am reconciled unto the doom
Of widowhood—this Babe doth reconcile me.
But thine is lying in the fearful darkness
Of an uncertain fate—and I now feel
A beating at my heart—a cold sick flutter
That sends this black expression to my face,
Although it nothing mean.

Wife. O that some bird,
Some beautiful bird, with soft and purple feathers,
Would sail into this room, in silence floating
All round these blessèd walls, with the boon of life
Beneath its outspread wings—a holy letter
In mercy written by an angel's hand,
In bright words speaking of deliverance!
—A raven! hear that dismal raven croak
Of death and judgment! See the Demon sitting
On the green before the window—croak, croak, croak!
'Tis the Evil-One in likeness of that bird
Enjoying there my mortal misery!

Boy. 'Tis not a raven, mother—the tame crow
Of cousin William, that comes hopping here
With its clipt wings—ay, almost every day—
My father himself oft fed that bird, and put it
Upon my head, where it would sit and caw,
And flutter with its wings,—and all the while
My father laughed—it was so comical,
He said, to see that black and sooty crow
Sitting on my white hair.

Wife. Your father laughed!
[*Laughing herself hysterically.*

Boy. Oh! that he were come back from prison—Mother!
Last night I fought a boy who said in sport
That my father would be hanged.

Wife. The little wretch!
What did he say?

Boy. That my father would be hanged!

Wife. O God! the senseless child did speak the truth!
He hath heard his parents talking of the trial,
And in his careless levity repeated
The shocking words—ay—laughing all the while,
Then running to his play—perhaps intending
To ask the master for a holiday
To see the execution. Cursèd brat!
What place is sacred held from cruelty,
When it doth leer within an infant's eyes
And harden his glad heart!

Boy. I beat him, mother.
He is a lying boy—he ne'er speaks truth—
And when my father is come home again,
I will ask him if he recollects that saying!
No, I will look at him, and pass him by

With a proud smiling face—I will forgive him,
And shake hands with him in my happiness.
Wife. The sun is shining—children, go to play
For an hour out-of-doors.
Boy. Come, sisters—come!
We will go out-of-doors—but not to play.
Come to the little green-plat in the wood,
And say our prayers together for our father.
Then if we play—'twill be some gentle game,
And all the while we will think upon our father
Coming out of that dark cell.—Come, sisters—come!
Friend. Children so good as these must not be orphans!
Yet I am glad to see thy soul prepared
Even for the worst.
Wife. My soul prepared for the worst!
No; that can never be—(*goes to the window,*)—A cloud of thunder
Is hanging o'er the city! black as night!
I hear it rumbling—what a hollow growl!
O dreadful building where the Judge is sitting
In judgment on my husband! All the darkness
Of the disturbèd heavens is on its walls.
—And now the fatal sentence is pronouncing.
The Court at once is hushed—and every eye
Bent on my husband! "Hanged till you are dead,
Hanged by the neck!"—As thou dost hope for mercy,
O savage Judge! recall these wicked words!
For thy own wife who waits for thee at home
Is not more innocent than my poor husband!
[*She flings herself down on the floor in an agony of grief.*
Friend. Mercy is with the King—and he is merciful!
Wife. What! what! do you believe an innocent man
Was e'er condemned to die!—To die for murder!
—Did mercy ever reach one so condemned?
Friend. Yes! I have read of one wretch pardonèd
Even on the scaffold—where the light of truth
Struck, like the sunshine suddenly burst forth,
And tinged with fearful joy the ghastly face
Of him who had no thought but that of death.
And back unto his widow-wife went he,
Like a ghost from the grave—and there he sat
Before the eyes of her who knew him not,
But took him for a vision, and fell down
In a death fit of wildered happiness.

Wife. Mercy dwells with the King—and he is merciful!
O blest for ever be the hoary head
Of our kind-hearted King!—I will away
And fling myself down before his royal feet!
Who knows but that the monarch in his palace
Will see within his soul this wretched cottage,
And, like a saving angel, with one word
Breathe over it the air of paradise?
—Mercy is with the King—and he is merciful!

Friend. Fortune is blind—but justice eagle-eyed,
He will not be condemned.

Wife. Give me some water!
My soul is faint with thirst!—Do they not say
That men upon the scaffold call for water?
—"Give me a glass of water!" 'tis his voice—
My husband's voice!—No! he is not condemned!
A thousand voices from these silent walls
Cry out "he shall not die!"—

(*Enter a young* CLERGYMAN.)

Clergyman. Methinks that God hath shed a calm to-day
Over the house of mourning. Is it so?

Wife. Thy presence brings a calm. Oh! one like thee
Should bear good tidings.

Clergyman. Last night in his cell
I saw your husband after his long trial,
And sure I am that never did he sit
Even in this room among his family
With more composèd face, or stiller soul,
Than he sat there upon his bed of straw,
With fetters on his limbs.

Wife. Fetters on his limbs!

Clergyman. He felt them not—or if he faintly felt them,
It was not in his soul—for it was free
As a lark in heaven.

Wife. He was not shedding tears!

Clergyman. No—with a calm and quiet face he looked at me,
And in his eyes there was a steadfast light
By grief unclouded, and undimmed by tears.
So was it while the blameless man was speaking
Of himself and of his trial: then he spake
Of those he loved, and as he breathed the name
Of this sweet farm "Lea-side!" then truly tears
Did force their way, but soon he wiped them off,

And raised to heaven a clear unfaltering prayer
For his wife and children—the most touching prayer,
I think, that ever flowed from human lips!

Wife. Is there no hope, then, after all, of life?

Clergyman. Yes! there is hope—though I am forced to say
That he doth stand upon the darksome brink
Of danger and of death.

Wife. I hear thy words,
And I can bear them! For my suffering spirit
Hath undergone its pains, and I am left,
Even like a woman after travail, weak—
But in a slumbrous quiet that succeeds
The hour of agony. [*She sinks into sleep.*

Clergyman. My friend! behold
How quietly that worn-out wretch doth sleep.

Friend. Calm as an infant!

Clergyman. Even too deep for dreams!
How meekly beautiful her face doth smile
As from a soul that never had known grief!
Methinks that God, in that profound repose,
Will breathe submission through her innocent soul,
And she who lay down with a mortal's weakness
May wake in power and glory like an angel
Whom trouble cannot touch.

(*Enter the Children weeping.*)

Friend. What ails ye, my sweet children—but speak softly—
Your mother is asleep.

Girl. O tell it, brother!
For my heart beats so that I cannot speak!

Boy. When we were coming homewards down the lane
That leads from the Fox-wood, that old dumb Woman
Who tells folk's fortunes, from behind the hedge
Leapt out upon the road, before our faces,
And with that dreadful barking voice of hers,
And grinning mouth, and red and fiery eyes,
All the while shaking at us her black hair,
She took a rope of rushes and did tie it
Like a halter round her neck, and pulled it tight
Till she grew black in the face! Then shook her hand
Against our cottage, while my father's name
Seemed half-pronounced in that most hideous gabble.
Then with one spring she leapt behind the hedge,
Where, as we ran away, we heard her laughing!

And oh! a long, loud, cruel laugh it was!
As if she laughed to know that our poor father
Was now condemned to die!

Friend. O wicked wretch! the silence of her soul
Is filled with cruel thoughts—even like a madhouse
With the din of creatures raving. None can guess
The wrath of this dumb savage!

(*The door opens, and the dumb woman enters making a hideous noise, and with signs intimating that some one is to be hanged. The prisoner's wife, wakened by the noise, starts from her sleep.*)

Wife. Thou silent, speechless messenger of death!
Louder thy dumbness than a roaring cannon!
Away—away—thou fury, from my sight!
—God save me from that woman! or deliver
Her soul from the devils that torment her thus!

(*The children hide themselves, and the dumb woman rushes out with peals of wild laughter.*)

Her face was black with death—a hellish joy
Shone through her idiot eyes—as if a fiend
Had taken that rueful body for a dwelling,
And from these glazèd sockets loved to look
With a horrid leer upon us mortal creatures,
A leer of unrepentant wickedness,
Hating us because we are the work of God!

Boy. I wish that she were dead and buried.

Wife. O now that she is gone, hope leaps again
Within my heart—her hideous mummery
Must not be suffered to confound me so.
And yet, they say, that she did prophesy,
With the wild motion of her witch-like hands,
That fatal sinking of the ferry-boat
In which whole families perished. Hush! I hear
The tread of feet—it is the Messenger
Come from the City.

(*Enter Messenger with a letter in his hand.*)

Wife. Speak, speak instantly—
Speak! Why do you come here unless you speak?
—His face doth seem composed.

Messenger. Poor Francis Russel!
Now all is over with him—he is condemned!

Wife. What did he say?—Why art thou gabbling thus,
As none can understand?—Give me that letter.

[*Tears it open and reads it aloud.*

"They have found me guilty, Mary! trust in God."

[*She flings herself down on the floor, and her Children lie down crying beside her.*

Messenger. I cannot bear the sight—good folks, farewell.

Wife. "My Mary, trust in God." I cannot trust
In God!—Oh! wilt Thou in thy wrath allow
My innocent husband thus to be destroyed?——
I cannot trust in God! O cursed for ever
Be all the swarm of idiot witnesses,
Jury and Judge, who thus have murdered him,
And may his blood for generations lie
Heavy on their children's souls!

Girl. O brother! see
'Tis our poor Father's writing. Yet his hand
Seems never to have shaken.—Innocence,
He used to say, did make small children fearless,
And it will make him happy in his prison,
Till we rush in, and wait till he is pardoned,
Which will be. . . . .

Wife. Never will he leave his dungeon
But for the scaffold. Would that I were dead,
And all my children corpses at my side,
Never again to wake. . . . . for mercy is not
In heaven or earth. There is no Providence!

[*Covers her face and tears her hair.*

Clergyman. These are affecting words from one so good
And truly pious. But our human nature,
When touched at the heart by Misery's icy hand,
Oft shrieks out with a wild impiety,
Against its better will. Yet that shrill cry
Is heard in heaven with pity, and on earth
Is often followed by the calm still voice
Of resignation melting into prayer.

Wife (*starting up*). Where art thou? What impenetrable cloud
Hides thee from justice, thou grim murderer!
On whom the dead man's blood, the quick man's tears,
Now call with twofold vengeance? Drive him forth,
O Fear, into the light, and I shall know him,
Soon as my eye meets his. His very name
Will burst instinctively from my big heart,
And he will answer to it. Where art thou
With thy red hands, that never may be cleansed?

Friend. 'Tis five weeks to the day of execution,
And he may be discovered——

Wife. Execution!
And will they make my husband mount a ladder
Up to a scaffold? May he rather die
Of anguish in his cell!—Where are my children?
—O they are weeping even upon my breast!
—Would they had ne'er been born!—Eternal shame
Will lie upon them! lovely as they are,
And good, and pure, and innocent as angels,
They will be scorned and hated!—Save my husband,
Great God of Mercy! Jesus! save my husband.
—O many thousand miles of clouds and air
Lie between me and God! and my faint voice
Returns unto the earth, while the still heavens,
Like the deep sea above a drowning head,
Mind not the stifled groans of agony!
Clergyman. I will go to his cell and pray with him.
He had foreseen his doom,—and be assured
That he is sitting in the eye of God,
With meek composure, not in agony.
The Children. O take us with you!
Clergyman. For a while, farewell.
The wife's heart now is like a heavy cloud,
But tears will lighten it—God be with you all!

SCENE II.

The condemned Cell.—The PRISONER *in Chains. The Prison Clock strikes.*

Prisoner. That was a dreadful toll! it brings me nearer
Unto the day of horror. Here am I
Delivered over to the fear of death
In cold and rueful solitude—shut out
By that black vault of stone from memory
Of human beings—and, as it would seem,
From the pity of my God! Who thinks on me?
The crowd that came to hear my sentence passed
Are scattered o'er the City, and my fate
Is by them all forgotten, or pronounced
With faces of indifference or of pleasure,
Among the chance discoursing of the day.

And yet my silent solitary cell
Is in the heart of life !—O joyful sound
Of life and freedom in a rushing tumult
Sweeping o'er the streets in the bright open day !
O that I were a beggar, clothed in rags !
Preyed on by cold and hunger—and with wounds
Incurable, worn down unto a shadow,
So that I knew not when I was to die !
—I hear the blind man singing in the street
With a clear gladsome voice, a jocund song !
What is the loss of eyes !—Thou bawling wretch,
Disturb him not ! With what a hideous twang
He howls out to the passing traveller,
"A full account of Francis Russel's trial,
The murderer's confession."——Save my soul—
O save me from that hideous skeleton ! . . . .

[*Dashes himself on the floor.*

(*The* JAILER *enters with bread and water.*)

Jailer. Look up, my friend—I bring you some refreshment.

Prisoner (*staring wildly*). Art thou the executioner ?

Jailer. No. The Jailer.

Prisoner. Is the fatal hour arrived ?

Jailer. I'm not the hangman.

Prisoner. One single drop of wine ! These two last days
Have put my blood into a burning fever,
Yet the thought of water sickens at my heart.
One single drop of wine.

Jailer. I must not give it.

Prisoner. O that a want like this should seem a hardship
To one condemned to die ! My wretched body
With fiery fever wastes my quaking soul,
And rather would I have one drop of wine
Than voice of friends or prayers of holy men,
So faint and thirsty is my very being.

Jailer. What must be must.

Prisoner. O cold and heavy chains !
How shockingly they glitter as they clank !

Jailer. You soon will get accustomed to their weight.
Observe that ring there runs along the stanchel,
On the stone-floor—so you may drag your legs
From wall to wall with little difficulty,
And in a week or two you'll never heed

The clanking of the iron. The last criminal
Was but a lath of a man compared with you,
And yet whenc'er I came into his cell
I found him always merrily at work,
Backward and forward whisking constantly
Like a bird in his cage.

Prisoner. Was he set free at last?

Jailer. Ay. Jack Ketch set him free.

Prisoner. What was his crime?

Jailer. A murderer, like yourself. He killed his sweetheart,
And threw her, though some six months gone with child,
Into a coal-pit.

Prisoner (*sternly*). Leave me to myself.

Jailer. Why! Man, I wish to be on good terms with you.
I am your friend. What! many a noble fellow
Hath in his day done murder: in the name
There may be something awkward—but the act
Still varies with the change of circumstance—
I would as lief shake hands with thee, my friend,
As with the Judge himself.

Prisoner (*eagerly*). Dost think me innocent?

Jailer (*ironically*). O yes! as innocent as any lamb.
But hark ye! if that I allow your friends
To visit you at times, you in return
Will let me show you to the country-people
On a chance market-day.

Prisoner. O God of mercy!

Jailer. There will they stand beyond reach of your arm,
With open mouth and eyes like idiots.
Then look unto each other—shake their heads,
And crying out, "God bless us!" leave the cell,
No doubt much wiser than they came—quite proud
To think how they will make their neighbours shudder
At the picture of thy murderous countenance,
And eyes so like a demon's—we will share
The money, friend. . . . .

Prisoner. The money!—What of money?

Jailer. Why, you are surely deaf. . . . .

Prisoner. Give me the water.
[*Drinks eagerly.*
Take—take the bread, that I may die of hunger.
[*The* JAILER *goes out of the cell.*
I feel as if buried many a fathom deep
In a cave below the sea, or in some pit

Covered o'er with thorns amid a darksome wood,
Where one might lie from Sabbath unto Sabbath
Shrieking madly out for help, but all in vain,
Unto the solitary trees, or clouds
That pass unheeding o'er the far-off heavens!
Five weeks must drag their days and nights along
Through the damp silence of this lonesome cell,
And all that time must I be sitting here
In doleful dreams—or lying on this straw,
With nought but shivering terror in my soul—
Or hurrying up and down with clanking chains
In wrath and sickness and insanity,
A furious madman preying on myself,
And dashed against the walls.—What spirit moves
These bolts? O welcome, whosoe'er thou art!
A very demon's presence in this dungeon
Would be a comfort.

(*The door opens, and the young* CLERGYMAN *enters.*)

Son of righteousness!
Let me fall down and worship at thy feet.

Clergyman. O man of trouble! put your trust in God.
Morning and evening will I seek your cell,
And read the Bible with you. Rise—O rise!

Prisoner. Despise me not that on this cruel pavement
I dash myself down in fear and agony,
And grovel at your feet! A pitiful wretch
Indeed am I; and to preserve my life
Would hang my head in everlasting shame,
Or lonesome hungered in a desert dwell,
Doomed never more to sleep.

Clergyman. Unhappy man!
Say what thou wilt, for I will listen to thee.

Prisoner (*looking up*). Can you not save me?—On a quiet bed,
Surrounded by my weeping family,
I might have died like other mortal creatures
In awful resignation; but to stand
Upon a scaffold in my native parish,
With a base halter round my abject neck,
Stared at, and hissed at, shuddered at, and scorned,
Put out of life, like a dog, with every insult
Cruelly forced on my immortal soul,
And then . . . . O Christ, I hear a skeleton
Rattling in chains!—To a madhouse carry me,
Bind me to the floor, that when the day arrives

The hangman's hand may strive in vain to burst
The bolts that chain the Lunatic to life.
I will feign madness. No—Eternal God!
I need not feign, for like a tide it cometh,
Wave after wave, upon my choking spirit . . . .
I am bound to a stake within the mark o' the sea,
And the cold drowning mounts up from my feet.

Clergyman. Send peace, O Lord! unto the sufferer's heart.

Prisoner. Suddenly, suddenly in my happiness
The curse did smite me. O, my gentle Alice,
Is the sweet baby now upon thy breast?
The Mother and the Infant both will die.
The dreadful day of execution
Will murder us all, and Lea-side then will be
Silent as the grave. O fearful Providence,
Darken my brain, that I may think no more
On thy wild ways that only lead to death,
To misery, to madness, and to hell!
Is all I say not true? Didst hear him speak?
That savage Judge, who with a hollow voice,
As if he had a pleasure in my anguish,
Continued speaking hours most bitterly
Against a quaking prisoner bowed with shame?
He had forgotten that I was a man!
And ever as he turned his hardened eye
Towards the bar, it froze my very heart,
So proud, so cruel, and so full of scorn.
I think he might have wept, for many wept
When he passed sentence on me—but his voice
Was calm and steady, and his eye was clear,
Looking untroubled on the face of trouble.
I did not faint—No—though a sickening pang
Tugged at my heart, and made the cold sweat creep
Like ice-drops o'er my body—yet even then
Did conscious innocence uphold my soul,
And turned the horrid words to senseless sounds
That ought not to dismay—while he that sat
In pompous robes upon the judgment-seat,
Seemed in his blind unfeeling ignorance
A verier wretch than I.

Clergyman. We are all blind,
And duty's brow is stern, and harsh his voice.
That Judge is famed for his humanity,
And though no tears were in his solemn eyes,
They flowed within his heart.

Prisoner. I do forgive him.
What shrieks were these?
Clergyman. Of a poor criminal
In the next cell.
Prisoner. Condemned like me to die!
Clergyman. No! doomed to drag out in a foreign land,
Unpitied years of misery and shame.
Prisoner. O happy lot! who would not leap with joy
Into the ship that bore him to the land
Of shame and toil, and crime and wickedness,
So that with all his load of misery
He might escape from death! May not I escape?
Bolts have been riven, and walls been undermined,
And the free winds have borne the prisoner
To the dark depths of safety—never more
To walk the streets of cities, but to dwell
As in the shadow of the grave, unknown
But to his own soul silent as the night!
I feel a wild hope springing from despair!
That shadow was not mine that stood all white
Shivering on a scaffold :—Sampson's strength is here,
And the hard stone to my unwearied hand
Will crumble into dust.
Clergyman. O let us pray!
Prisoner. Yes, I will pray! pray for deliverance,
And years to come! O be they what they may,
For life is sweet, embittered though it be
With the lowest dregs in the cup of misery!
Clergyman. Shall we kneel down?
Prisoner. Ay! they will dance and dance,
And smile and laugh, and talk of pleasant things,
And listen to sweet music all the night,
That I am lying fettered to the straw
In dire convulsions. They will speak of me
Amid their mirth and music, but will see not
My image in their souls, or it would strike them
With palsy 'mid their savage merriment,
Clanking these dreadful fetters in their ears.
Clergyman. I will return at night.
Prisoner. O leave me not,
For I am scarcely in my sober mind.
A thousand fiends are waiting to destroy me
Soon as you leave the cell, for innocence
Is found not proof against the pains of hell.
Clergyman. I will bring your wife to visit you.

Prisoner (kneeling). O God
Of tender mercies, let thy countenance
Shine on that wretched one. Let this cell lie
Forsaken of thy presence—if thy will—
But, for His sake who died upon the cross,
Let heavenly sunshine fall into her soul!
Temper the wind to the shorn lamb that lies
Upon her breast in helpless infancy!
Oh! if our cottage could but rest in peace,
Here could I pass the remnant of my life
In lonely resignation to my fate.
Forsake not her and my sweet family.
Clergyman. Man forsakes man—that melancholy word
Applieth not to gracious Providence.
Prisoner. I am not then forsaken?
Clergyman. Fear it not!
Wrapt in the dark cloud of adversity,
Thou art indeed; but clouds are of the earth.
Lift up the eye of Faith, and thou wilt see
The clear blue sky of the untroubled Heavens.
Prisoner. My soul at once is calmed—now let us pray.

PART II.

SCENE I.

The Morning of the day of Execution—The young CLERGYMAN *and another* FRIEND *sitting beside the* PRISONER, *who is asleep.*

Clergyman. He stirs as he would wake.
Friend. List! list! he speaks!
Clergyman. A smile is on his face—a kindling smile.
Friend. Oh! when he wakes!
Clergyman. Hearken—he speaks again.
Prisoner (in his sleep). O, my sweet Alice! 'Twas a dreadful dream!
Am I in truth awake? Come to my heart!
There—there—I feel thy breath—pure—pure—most pure.
Friend. What a deep sigh of overwhelming bliss!
Hell gapes for him when he awakes from heaven.

Clergyman. Will not the same benignant Providence
That blesseth now his sleep, uphold him falling
Into the shadow of death!
Prisoner. No tears, my Alice!
Weep—weep no more! Where is our infant, Alice?
Esther, where art thou? Mary? My sweet twins!
—I dreamt that I had bid thee farewell, Alice!
Why is that loving voice so slow to speak?
Hold me to thy bosom lest the curse return!
Why beats thy heart so . . . . .
Friend. Lo! his glazèd eyes
Are open—but methinks he sees us not.
Prisoner (*starting up*). My family are swept off from the earth.
—I know not, in the darkness of my brain,
My dreams from waking thoughts, nor these from dreams.
—Yes! yes! at once 'tis plain. O heaven of heavens!
Thou canst not be in all thy sanctity
A place so full of perfect blessedness,
As the bed where I was lying in my dream.
Clergyman. We have been praying for thee all the night.
Prisoner. What! my dear friends! good morning to you both.
Have I been sleeping long?
Clergyman. Since four o'clock,
And now 'tis almost eight.
Prisoner. Blest was that sleep
Beyond all human bliss! I was at home,
And Alice in my bosom . . . . Come, my friend,
You must not thus be overcome, this hour
Too awful is for tears. Look not on me
As on a son of anguish and despair,
But a Man, sorely stricken though he be,
Supported by the very power of Sorrow,
And Faith that comes a solemn comforter
Even hand-in-hand with Death.
Clergyman. Most noble spirit!
Fitter art thou with that untroubled voice
To comfort us than to be comforted.
Prisoner. This cell hath taught me many a hidden thing.
I have become acquainted with my soul
Through midnight silence, and through lonely days
Silent as midnight. I have found therein
A well of waters undisturbed and deep,
Of sustenance, refreshment, and repose.

Clergyman. On earth nought may prevail o'er innocence.
Prisoner. One night, methought, a voice said in my cell,
"Despondency, and Anguish, and Despair,
Are falling on thee! curse thy God and die!"—
"Peace, Resignation, and Immortal Hope,"
A dewy voice replied. It was a dream.
But the good angel's voice was in my soul,
Most sweet when I awoke, and from that hour,
A heavenly calm hath never left my cell.
Friend. O must we part for ever from our Friend!
Is there no hope? The hour of agony
Is hastening on, and there is none to save!
Clergyman. Forgive his grief. 'Tis easier to resign
Ourselves unto our fate, than to endure
The sight of one we love about to die.
Prisoner. A little brook doth issue from the hill
Above Lea-side, and, ere it reaches us,
Its course is loud and rocky, crying still
As with a troubled voice. But o'er the green
That smiles beside our door it glideth on,
Just like a dream, so soft and silently,
For ever cheerful and for ever calm.
Last night when you came here—I had been thinking
Of that sweet brook, and it appeared to me
An emblem of my own much-altered soul,
Lately so troubled, but now flowing on
In perfect calmness to eternity.
Friend. Thinking of Lea-side even unto the last.
Prisoner. Yes! I will think of it unto the last,
Of heaven and it by turns. There is no reason
Why it should be forgotten while I live.
I see it, like a picture on that wall,
In the silence of the morning, with its smoke,
Its new-waked smoke slow wreathing up to heaven!
And from that heaven, where through my Saviour's death
I humbly hope to be, I will look down
On that one spot—Oh! sure the loveliest far
On the wide earth! too sweet! too beautiful!
Too blest to leave without a gush of tears.
—They will drive me past my own door to the scaffold?
Friend. Such is the savage sentence.
Prisoner. It is well.
Friend. We never will forsake you to the last—
But proudly sit beside you . . . .

Prisoner. Sweet Lea-side!
And I will see my little farm again!
New-thatched with my own hand this very Spring—
All full of blossoms is my garden now,
And the sweet hum of bees!—Hushed be the wheels
As o'er a depth of snow, when they pass by!
That Alice may not hear the fearful sound,
And rush out with my children in her arms.

Clergyman. Fear not—she hath gone into her father's house.

Prisoner. I thought our parting had been past. But no!
Souls cannot part though parting words be breathed,
With deep abandonment of earthly loves.
Had I not dreamt that heavenly dream last night
Perhaps it had been so—but in that dream
My human nature burst again to life,
And I think upon my widow as before,
With love, grief, shame, dismay, and agony.

Clergyman. I am the father, says our gracious God,
Of the orphan and the widow.

Prisoner. 'Twas a pang!
A passing pang! (*Going to the window*)—It is a sunny day
Methinks if I had any tears to shed,
That I could weep to see the fading world
So beautiful! How brightly wilt thou smile,
O Sun, to-morrow, when my eyes are dark!
O 'tis a blessed earth I leave behind!

(*A noise at the door.*)

Friend. It is not yet the time!

Jailer enters. In half an hour
They will come to fetch the prisoner from his cell.

[*Goes out.*

Friend. O scowling savage! What a heart of stone!

Prisoner. I think he is less cruel than he seems.
Sometimes his face hath worn a look of pity,
And his voice softened; but his heart is blind
In ignorance, and hardened by the sight
Of unrepentant wickedness, and sorrows
Which human sympathy would fail to cure.
He seemed disturbed—he feels all he can feel.

Clergyman. Thou art indeed a Christian.

Prisoner. Death is near.
You know my heart, and will reveal it truly
To all who know my tale. The time will come

When innocence will vindicate itself,
And shame fall off my rising family
Like snow shaken from the budding trees in spring.
—They doubt not of their father's innocence?
Clergyman. Unshaken is the confidence of love
In hearts that know not sin—thy memory,
Hallowed by tribulation, will endure . . . . .
Prisoner. Enough—enough. Here take this blessèd book,
Which from my dying father I received,
And give it to my wife. Some farewell thoughts
I have dared to write beneath my children's names,
Recorded duly there soon as baptized.
And now I have no more to say to man.
Leave me alone a little while—and wait
In the open street, till I appear before you.
Friend. We fear to leave the cell—you look so pale!
As if about to faint.
Prisoner (*holding out his hand with a smile*). My pulse is steady.
Clergyman. We leave thee to thy God!

SCENE II.

Inside of a Cottage.—The Prisoner's WIFE *sitting with her* FRIEND, *surrounded by her Family.*

Wife. Speak to me! let my weeping children speak,
Although it be with sobs of agony.
Friend. See how composed your sweetest children sit
All round your knees! They weep, and sigh, and sob,
For piteous they and most compassionate.
But nature steals upon them in their grief,
And happy thoughts, in spite even of themselves,
Come o'er them—the glad light of infancy.
Mourn not for them—in little William's hand,
Although his heart be framed of love and pity,
Already see that play-thing! none need weep
For them a gracious God preserves in bliss.
Wife. 'Tis not on them I think—O God! O God!
Friend. He soon will be in Heaven.
Wife. A dreadful path
Must first be trod. O 'tis most horrible!

Friend. Since that last scene is present to your soul
I dare to speak of it. The face of death
More hideous seems to us who gaze upon it
Bent towards a friend we love, than to the wretch
Who sees the black frown fixed upon himself.
The fears of fancy are most terrible,
But when the apprehended misery comes,
The spirit smiles to feel how bearable
The heaviest stroke of fate.
Wife. Thy kind voice seems
To speak of comfort, though the words are dark.
Misery's sick soul is slow to understand,
Yet I will listen, for that gentle voice
Brings of itself relief.
Friend. Calm, unappalled—
How many mount the scaffold! Even Guilt,
Strong in repentance, often standeth there
And quaketh not. And will not innocence
Victoriously from that most rueful place
Look o'er the grave—nor death's vain idle show
Have power to raise one beating in his heart?
Wife. O what a dreadful night he must have passed!
Friend. Nay—fear it not—the night before they die,
Condemnèd men enjoy unbroken sleep,
By mercy sent to their resignèd souls,
Calming and strengthening for the morrow's trial.
While we were weeping—his closed eyes were dry,
And his soul hushed in deep forgetfulness.
Wife. I feel as if I ne'er shall sleep again!
The look with which he flung his body down
On the stone-floor, when I was carried from him,
Will never pass away. O that sweet face
Was changed indeed by nature's agony,
Sunk, fallen, hollow, bloodless, and convulsed!
Friend. O strive to think on other prison-hours,
When, on your knees together, lost in prayer,
You seemed two happy Beings offering up
Thanksgiving, rather than poor suppliants
Imploring resignation to your doom.
Wife. No. I will think but of that desperate hour
When darkness fell between us, there to brood
Until we meet in heaven. Come near to me,
For I must tell thee how my husband looked
When wicked men did tear those two asunder
Whom God, and love, and nature had united.

Friend. O spare me— spare me—on yourself have pity,
And these soft-hearted ones—too apt to weep!
Wife. Why should I fear to speak?
Friend. Your infant wakes!
Here, take it to your breast—
Wife. Heed, heed it not.
—For hours we sat, and dreamt, and spoke, and wept,
Recalled our happy life to memory,
From the hour we first met on yon sunny brae!
Our friendship, love, and marriage,—the sweet child
That came to bless our first delightful spring—
All our sweet children! not forgetting her
Who went so young to heaven. The Jailer came,
Or some one with a black and cruel countenance,
And changed at once our sorrow to despair.
We had not thought of parting—in the past
So buried were our hearts!—such images
Blinded our spirits with the tears of love.
And though we felt a dire calamity
Brought us together in that hideous cell,
We thought not what it was; till all at once,
The prison-door flew open, and they dragged me,
Not shrieking—as perhaps I now do shriek—
But with a cold weight sickening at my heart
That in convulsions drowned a thousand shrieks,
And brought at last a dark forgetfulness
Of my own sufferings, and my husband's doom.
Long streets seemed passing slowly by my brain,
And fields and trees—until at once I knew
The faces of my weeping family,
And this my Father's house. A dreadful dream!
Yet could I wish to rave of it for ever!

(*Her eldest* DAUGHTER *steals up with a Book in her hand.*)

Daughter. Here is a book which little Mary Grieve
(She who has wept as much for my poor Father
As if she were a sister of our own)
Gave me a week ago, a happy book,
Which lies below my pillow when I sleep.
Look at it, Mother! 'tis the history
Of one reprieved when just about to die.
I have read it till it seems a sad true tale
Of all my Father's woe—and when I read it
Even on the darkest day, believe me, Mother,
A gleam of sunshine falls upon the leaves,

Straight down from heaven! There is a picture—look!
Is it not like my Father's gentle face?
Wife (*grasping the book*). As sure as God is in heaven! it is the same!—
His wife and children too with eyes and faces
Of mad delirious joy all fixed on heaven!
And well they may—then and for evermore.
Daughter. I showed it to our clergyman—he smiled—
And laid his gentle hand upon my hair,
And with a low kind voice he bade me hope.
Wife. He bade thee hope!
Daughter. Yes—and I thought he wept.
Wife. He tried to comfort the sweet innocent!
Daughter. Though I should see my father in the cart
Passing our very door . . . . . .
Wife. Will he pass our door?
I will rush out and clasp him, and beseech
Kind heaven to let me die upon his breast.
[*Goes towards the door.*
I had forgot—we are not at Lea-side.
—Come to me, little William—weep not, child!
Boy. O yesterday we saw a dreadful sight!
Daughter. William—hold your peace.
Wife. What saw my little boy?
Boy. We went last night to meet with Mary Grieve
Coming from school. And oh! upon the bridge
Two men were building up—I did not ask them—
They told me what it was—and we ran home
Fearing to look back.
Wife. O shut out the sun,
That blinds my soul with its accursèd light!
Close—close the shutters—that eternal darkness
May cover me and my poor family,
And the wild world with all its miseries
Be blank as if we all were in the grave.
[*The shutters are closed.*
Boy. Mother! let me come closer to your knees!
Wife. O let the light come in—this silent darkness
Is worse than light—light is but mockery—
But darkness is the haunted tomb of death
Which shuddering nature never may endure.
—I never thought thy face so sad before
As in that sudden light.—(*Clock strikes.*)—What hour? what hour?
Friend. Your husband's strife is o'er.

Wife. Praise be to God.
(*Falls on her knees*).—O thou that art an angel in the sky,
Strengthen my soul that I on earth may cherish
Those whom thou lovest—these infants round my feet.
Friend. Such prayers go up to heaven—swifter than light.
Wife. The body shall have Christian burial!
I will away that no base hand disturb it.
What though it felt the cruel death of shame,
Is it not beautiful and fair to see,
As if he rested from the harvest-toil
In some cool shady place o'erhung with trees?
It shall be dressed with flowers—a thousand times,
A thousand thousand times my lips will kiss it,
And when it is laid in the grave at last,
Oh! will not tears from many hundred eyes
Fall on the coffin, and a hundred tongues
Bless him th' unhappy—him the innocent?
—Methinks I can endure the daylight now.
[*She goes to the window.*
O Lord! yon hill-side is quite black with people
All standing motionless—with heads uncovered.
Are they gazing all on him? Alive? or dead?—
This is a sight to drive my soul to madness,
To blasphemy and disbelief in God!
Friend. I thought the hour was past.
Wife. You knew it was not.
Upon the self-same side of that black mount
I saw a pious congregation sitting
Last summer's sacrament! and now they come
To enjoy an execution. Wretched things!
They little understand the words of Christ.
Friend. It seems in truth most cruel—dreadful show
Of fixèd faces! many a troubled soul
Is gazing there, yet loves the agony
It makes itself to suffer—turns away—
Then looks and shudders, and with cheeks as wan
And ghastly as the man about to die,
Waits for the hideous moment—greedily
Devouring every motion of his eyes
Now only bent to heaven.
Wife. O senseless wretches!
Thus tamely witnessing the guiltless die.
Rush down upon the scaffold—rend it—crush it
Into a thousand atoms—tear away

Th' accursed halter from his innocent neck,
And send him like a lark let loose to heaven,
Into the holy light of liberty.
—One hour delay the execution!
For from afar the words of mercy come—
I hear them on the wind—"Reprieve—Reprieve"—
O, gazing multitude! look grim no more,
But shout until both earth and heaven reply!
Salvation is at hand—Reprieve—Reprieve!

(*She rushes out into the air, followed by her* FRIEND *and her Children, who endeavour to restrain her in vain.*)

SCENE III.

A Field in the Country.—Labourers reposing.

The Master. Come, Mary Macintyre—give us a song,
Then to our work again. Thou hast a voice
So sweet, that even the Linnet on the broom
Might take a lesson from thee.

SONG.

A bird in Spring had built her nest
In a tuft o' flowers on a Castle-wa',
Whare saftly on her bonny breast
The dew and licht o' heaven did fa'.

Amang the moss and silky hair
Twa young anes lay in love thegither—
And oh! their yellow plumes were fair
When glinting in the sunny weather.

Upon that Tower for mony an hour
Anither bird wad sit and sing,
Or resting on that red wa'-flower
In sleep wad fauld his gowden wing.

Ae morning at the break o' day
I saw the nest a' pearl'd wi' dew,
That like a net o' diamonds lay
Aboon that flower o' freshest hue.

I couldna see the bonny Bird,
She cower'd sae close upon her nest,
But that saft ither sang I heard
That lull'd her and her brood to rest.

Sweet through the silent dawning rung
The pleasure o' that lanely sang,
And the auld Tower again look'd young
That psalm sae sweetly sail'd alang.

Mair sweetly breath'd the birchen grove
That waved upon the Castle Hill,
And a' the earth look'd fresh wi' love
The moment that the sang was still!

At gloaming I cam back that way,
But I miss'd the flower sae red and sweet,
And the nest whare thae twa birdies lay,
Wae's me! was herried at my feet.

I wadna weep for the dead wa'-flower,
Sweet birds! gin I kent whare ye were gane,
But the low has blacken'd the auld Mearns-Tower,
And bluid is drapping frae ilka stane.

And he that herried the Lintwhite's nest,
And kill'd the auld birds wi' his sling,
He wadna spare the chirping breast
Nor the down upon the wee bit wing.

Master. It is an old traditionary song.
The Maxwells in a body from Hag Castle
At midnight came, and burn'd the good Mearns-Tower,
With young Laird Stewart and his English Lady,
And their four pretty bairns. They burned them all.
The Lady's blood is still upon the stones
Of the west-corner. Many a blashing storm
Hath driven across them, yet they still are red.
'Tis two o'clock, come to our work again!

Young Man. Oh! I am sick at heart! this very moment,
Is my poor Master standing on the scaffold!
Go, go to work—I will kneel down and pray
For his departing soul. [*Kneels down.*

Master. His hour is come.
Men, women, children, now all rush to see him
In his white death-clothes standing like a ghost!
Ay, lasses, ye may weep—yet will that crowd
Show many a female face—girls like yourselves
In their best gowns adorned for holiday,—

And wives that love their husbands—and even mothers
With infants in their arms. Confound their cruelty!
Enough of death there is in this wide world
Near each man's fireside, or his neighbour's house!
Why rush to see him in the open day-light
Standing with fear, and shame, and agony?

Mary. Oh! on that sweet hill-side he often sat
Watching his young spring-lambs! and now even there
Is he about to die the death of shame!

Master. Methinks I see the hill-side all alive,
With silent faces gazing steadfastly
On one poor single solitary wretch,
Who views not in the darkness of his trouble
One human face among the many thousands
All staring towards the scaffold! some are there
Who have driven their carts with his unto the market,
Have shook hands with him meeting at the fair,
Have in his very cottage been partakers
Of the homely fare which reverently he blessed;
Yea! who have seen his face in holier places,
And in the same seat been at worship with him,
Within the House of God. May God forgive them!

Mary. He is not guilty.

Master. Everything is dark.
Last in the company of the murdered man—
Blood on his hands—a bloody knife concealed—
The coin found on him which the widow swore to—
His fears when apprehended—and the falsehoods
Which first he uttered—all perplex my mind.
And then they say the murdered body bled
Soon as he touched it.—Let us to our work,
Poor people oft must work with heavy hearts.
—Oh! doth that sunshine smile as cheerfully
Upon Lea-side as o'er my happy fields!

(*The Scene changes to a little field commanding a view of the place of execution. Two* YOUNG MEN *looking towards it.*)

1*st Man.* I dare to look no longer.—What dost thou see?

2*d Man.* There is a stirring over all the crowd.
All heads are turned at once. O God of Heaven!
There Francis Russel comes upon a cart,
For which a lane is opened suddenly!
On, on it goes—and now it has arrived
At the scaffold foot.

1*st Man.* Say! dost thou see his face?

2*d Man.* Paler than ashes.
1*st Man* (*coming forward*). Let me have one look.
O what white cheeks! see, see—his upward eyes
Even at this distance have a ghastly glare.
I fear that he is guilty. Fear has bathed
In clammy dew his long lank raven hair.
His countenance seems convulsed—it is not paleness
That dims his cheeks—but a wild yellow hue
Like that of mortal sickness or of death.
Oh! what the soul can suffer, when the Devil
Sits on it, grimly laughing o'er his prey,
Like a carrion-bird beside some dying beast,
Croaking with hunger and ferocity! [*He turns away.*
2*d Man.* He is standing on the scaffold—he looks round—
But does not speak—some one goes up to him—
He whispers in his ear—he kisses him—
He falls on his knees—now no one on the scaffold
But he and that old Wretch! a rope is hanging
Right over his head—and, as my Maker liveth,
That demon as he grasps it with his fingers
Hath laughter on his face!
1*st Man.* How look the crowd?
2*d Man.* I saw them not—but now ten thousand faces
Are looking towards him with wide-open eyes!
Uncovered every head—and all is silent
And motionless as if 'twere all a dream.
1*st Man.* Is he still praying?
2*d Man.* I can look no more,
For death and horror round his naked neck
Are gathering! Curse those lean and shrivelled fingers
That calmly—slowly—and without a tremble—
Are binding unto agony and shame
One of God's creatures with a human soul!
—Hark! hark! a sudden shriek—a yell—a shout!—
The whole crowd tosses like a stormy sea.
But oh! behold how still and motionless
That figure on the scaffold!
1*st Man.* What can it mean?
2*d Man.* Perhaps with one soul all the crowd rise up
To rescue him from death.
1*st Man.* Let us away
And know what happens.—Hark! another shout
That rends the silent sky. See hats are waved!
And every face is bright—deliverance
Is in that peal of joy—he shall not die.

(*Scene changes to the place of execution.*)

Sheriff. Bring the man up—and let us hear his story.

(*A* SOLDIER *is dragged along by the crowd.*)

Soldier. I am the murderer.
One of the crowd. Here is Stephen's watch—
The watch of the murdered man—and his very purse—
Both found upon the villain.
Sheriff. 'Tis strong proof.
—What have you got to say against this charge?
Soldier. I robbed and murdered him—that's all—'tis true.
One of the crowd. Just as the prisoner rose up from his knees,
This soldier at my side took out his watch,
And with a cruel and unchristian oath
Proclaimed the hour, in laughing mockery.
My eye by chance fell on it—and the truth
Burst on my soul. I leapt upon the wretch,
And with a horrid cry he made confession
That he was the guilty man.
Sheriff. Scarce credible.
Soldier. 'Tis true. Last night I saw the Evil-One
In human shape as I sat among my comrades;
He stood close to my side—invisible
To all but me—and with a fiery eye
He then commanded me to go this day
And see the execution. So I came!
—And now behold the open gates of hell!
Sheriff. The execution cannot thus proceed.
Soldier. A little while—but yet a little while—
And I will come into the roaring pit
To dwell for ever with the damned!
One of the crowd. Mad—mad.
Sheriff. Ay! 'tis the madness of despair and guilt.
Unhalter yon poor wretch—he must be carried
Back to his prison—till the truth appear.

(*The* PRISONER'S *Wife, accompanied by her* FRIEND *and Children, rush through the crowd.*)

Wife. Come down—come down—my husband! from the scaffold.
—O Christ! art thou alive—or dead with fear!
Let me leap up with one bound to his side,
And strain him to my bosom till our souls
Are mixed like rushing waters.

Dost hear thy Alice? Come down from the scaffold,
And walk upon the green and flowery earth
With me, thy wife, in everlasting joy!

[*She tries to move forward, but falls down in a fainting-fit.*

One of the crowd. See—see his little daughter! how she tears
The covering from his eyes—unbinds the halter—
Leaps up to his bosom—and with sobs is kissing
His pale fixed face. "I am thy daughter—Father!"
But there he stands—as lifeless as a stone—
Nor sees—nor feels—nor hears—his soul seems gone
Upon a dismal travel!

[*The* PRISONER *is led down from the scaffold, with his Daughter held unconsciously in his arms.*

Prisoner. Must this wild dream be all dream't o'er again!
Who put this little child into my arms? My wife
Lying dead!—Thy judgments, Heaven! are terrible.
The Clergyman. Look up—this world is shining out once more
In welcome to thy soul recalled from death.
Prisoner. Oh! might that be—but this is not a dream
From which I may awake.—What, what has happened?
Clergyman. The murderer is discovered.

[*The Prisoner falls on his knees, and his Wife, who has recovered, goes and kneels by his side.*

Clergyman. Crowd not so round them—let the glad fresh air
Enter into their souls.
Prisoner. Alice! one word!
Let me hear thy voice assuring me of life.
Ah me! that soft cheek brings me by its touch
From the black, dizzy, roaring brink of death,
At once into the heart of happiness!
—Gasping with gratitude! she cannot speak.
Wife. I never shall smile more—but all my days
Walk with still footsteps, and with humble eyes,
An everlasting hymn within my soul
To the great God of Mercy!
Prisoner, (*starting up*). O thou bright angel with that golden hair,
Scattering thy smiles like sunshine through the light,

Art thou my own sweet daughter! Come, my child,
Come dancing on into thy father's soul!
Come with those big tears sparkling on thy cheeks,
And let me drink them with a thousand kisses.
—That laugh hath filled the silent world with joy!
Child. This night I will sit upon your knees once more,—
And oh! if ever I offend my father! . . . .
No—never—never!—All our cottage stands
Just as you left it—the old oaken chair
Will be filled to-night,—and our sweet hearth will burn
As it used to do—upon my Father's face!
—I too will pray—for though a little child,
God now will hear my prayers!
Prisoner (*looking round*). The fields and hills
Have now returned into their usual shape,
And all the sunny earth seems beautiful
As in my boyish days!——Oh! tell me—tell me—
Did I disgrace myself by abject fear
On the way from prison to yon hideous place?
Clergyman. No—thou wert calm. . . . .
Prisoner. My friend—O say not so.
For from the moment that I left the prison
Blind horror seized me—and I thought the earth
Was reddening round me from the bloody sky.
I recollect some faces in the cart
Glimmering! and something like a bridge we past
Over a deep glen filled with raging thunder!
Then all was hushed—and rose the voice of psalms
Doleful and wild! when suddenly I stood
In the fixed gazing of a million eyes,
And the feeling of my own identity
Came like a flash of lightning through my heart.
Crowd. Huzza! huzza! the guiltless is set free!
Lea-side to-night, and all its happy fields,
Shall shine as bright as in the gladsome day.
For we will kindle on yon little green
A bonfire that shall set the heavens on flame,
And send up sparkling to the far-off stars
Beams like themselves bright with deliverance.
Huzza! huzza! The guiltless is set free!

(*The scene closes.*)

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

Oh Nature! whose Elysian scenes disclose
His bright perfections at whose word they rose,
Next to that Power who formed thee and sustains,
Be thou the great inspirer of my strains.
Still, as I touch the lyre, do thou expand
Thy genuine charms, and guide an artless hand.

COWPER.

THE SCHOLAR'S FUNERAL.

WHY hang the sweet bells mute in Magdalene Tower,
Still wont to usher in delightful May,*
The dewy silence of the morning hour
Cheering with many a changeful roundelay?
And those pure youthful voices, where are they,
That, hymning far up in the listening sky,
Seemed issuing softly through the gates of day,
As if a troop of sainted souls on high
Were hovering o'er the earth with angel melody?

This day the pensive Choristers are mute,
The Tower stands silent in the shades of woe,
And well that darkness and those shadows suit
The solemn hush shed o'er the courts below.
There all is noiseless as a plain of snow,
Nor wandering footstep stirs the unechoing wall.
Hark—hark! the muffled bell is tolling slow!
Into my mournful soul its warnings fall—
It is the solemn day of Vernon's funeral.

No sound last night was heard these courts within,
Save sleepless scholar sobbing in his cell;
For mirth had seemed a sacrilegious sin
Against the dead whom all did love so well.
Only—at evening prayer the holy swell
Of organ at the close of service sent
(While on their knees the awe-struck weepers fell,
Or on the pillared shade in anguish leant)
Through the dim echoing aisle a sorrowful lament.

All night the melancholy moonshine slept
O'er the lone chamber where his corpse was laid:
Amid the sighing groves the cold dews wept,

* On the First of May the Choristers ascend the beautiful Tower of Magdalene College, Oxford, and there sing a Latin hymn to the Season.

And the sad stars in glimmering beams arrayed
In heaven seemed mourning o'er the parted shade
Of him who knew the nature and the name
Of every orb to human ken displayed,
Whether on silent throne a steadfast flame,
Or rolled in music round the Universal Frame.

And now the day looks mournful as the night,
For all o'er heaven black clouds begin to roll,
Through which the dim sun streams a fitful light
In sympathy with man's desponding soul.
Is nought around but images of dole !
The distant towers a kindred sorrow breathe,
Struck 'mid their own groves by that dismal toll ;
And the grey cloisters, coldly stretched beneath,
Hushed in profounder calm confess the power of death.

Sad for the glory that hath parted thence,
Through spire, tower, temple, theatre, and dome,
Mourns Oxford in her old magnificence,
Sublimely silent 'mid the sunless gloom.
But chief one College weeps her favourite's doom—
All hearts turn thither in the calm of morn ;
Silent she standeth like one mighty tomb,
In reverend beauty—desolate—forlorn—
For her refulgent star is all-untimely shorn.

Her courts grow darker as the hour draws near
When that blest corpse must sink for evermore,
Let down by loving hands to dungeon drear
From the glad world of sunshine covered o'er
By the damp pavement of the silent floor !
—Sad all around—as when a gentle day
All dimly riseth o'er a wreck-strewn shore,
When Love at last hath ceased to heaven to pray,
And Grief hath wept her fill, and Hope turned sick away.

Yea ! even a careless stranger might perceive
That death and sorrow rule this doleful place—
Passing along the grey-haired menials grieve,
Nor is it hard a tender gloom to trace
On the young chorister's sunshiny face,
While slow returning from the mournful room
Of friend where they were weeping o'er the days
With Vernon past—profoundly sunk in gloom
The pale-faced scholar walks, still dreaming of the tomb.

Now ghastly sight and lowly whispering sound
On every side the saddened spirit meet—
And notice give to all the courts around
Of doleful preparation—the rude feet
Of death's hired menials through this calm retreat
With careless tread are hurrying to and fro—
And loving hearts with pangs of anguish beat,
To see the cloisters blackening all below
With rueful sable plumes—a ghastly funeral-show.

—Come let us now with silent feet ascend
The stair that leads up to yon ancient tower—
—There, lieth in his shroud my dearest friend!
Oh! that the breath of sighs, the dewy shower
Streamed from so many eyelids had the power
Gently to stir, and raise up from its bed
The broken stalk of that consummate flower!
Nought may restore the odours once when shed,
That sunshine smiles in vain—it wakens not the dead!

Behold! his parents kneeling side by side,
Still as the body that is sleeping there!
Far off were they when their sweet Henry died,
At once they fell from bliss into despair.
What sorrows slumber in that silvery hair!
The old man groans, nor dares his face to show
To the glad day-light—while a sobbing prayer
Steals from the calmer partner of his woe,
Who gently lays her hand upon those locks of snow.

He lifts his eyes—quick through a parting cloud
The sun looks out—and fills the room with light,
Hath given a purer lustre to the shroud,
And plays and dances o'er those cheeks so white.
"Curst be the cruel Sun! who shines so bright
Upon my dead boy's face! one kiss—one kiss—
Before thou sink to everlasting night!
My child—my child!—oh! how unlike to this
The last embrace I gave in more than mortal bliss."

Pale as a statue bending o'er a tomb,
The childless mother! as a statue still!
But Resignation, Hope, and Faith illume
Her upward eyes! and her meek spirit fill
With downy peace, which blasts of earthly ill

May never ruffle more—a smile appears
At times to flit across her visage chill,
More awful rendering every gush of tears
Shed at the dark eclipse of all life's sunny years.

The whole path from his cradle to his grave
She travels back with a bewildered brain!
Bright in the gales of youth his free locks wave,
As if their burnished beauty laughed at pain,
And godlike claimed exemption from the reign
Of grief, decay, and death! Her touch doth meet
Lips cold as ice that ne'er will glow again,
And lo! from these wan lips unto his feet
Drawn by the hand of death a ghostly winding-sheet!

She hoped to have seen him in yon hallowed grove,
With gay companions laughing at his side,
And listening unto him whom all did love!
For she had heard with pure maternal pride
How science to his gaze unfolded wide
Her everlasting gates—but as he trod
The Temple's inner shrine, he sank and died—
And all of him that hath not gone to God
Within her loving clasp lies senseless as the clod.

With tottering steps she to the window goes.
Oh! what a glorious burst of light is there!
Rejoicing in his course the river flows,
And 'neath its coronet of dark-blue air
The stately Elm-grove rises fresh and fair,
Blest in the dewy silence of the skies!
She looks one moment—then in blind despair
Turns to the coffin where her Henry lies—
The green earth laughs in vain before his closèd eyes!

The Old Man now hath no more tears to shed—
Wasted are all his groans so long and deep—
He looks as if he cared not for the dead!
Or thought his Son would soon awake from sleep.
An agony there is that cannot weep,
That glares not on the visage, but is borne
Within the ruined spirit's dungeon-keep,
In darkness and in silence most forlorn,
Hugging the grave-like gloom, nor wishing for the morn.

Lo ! suddenly he starteth from his knees !
And hurrying up and down, all round the walls
Glances wild looks—and now his pale hands seize,
Just as the light on its expression falls,
Yon picture, whose untroubled face recalls
A smile for ever banished from the air !
" O dark ! my Boy ! are now thy Father's halls !
But I will hang this silent picture there,
And morn and night will kneel before it in despair."

With trembling grasp he lifts the idle gown
Worn by his Son—then closing his dim eyes,
With a convulsive start he flings it down,
Goes and returns, and loads it where it lies
With hurried kisses ! Then his glance espies
A letter by that hand now icy-cold
Filled full of love, and homebred sympathies ;
Naming familiarly both young and old,
And blessing that sweet Home he ne'er was to behold.

And now the Father lays his withered hand
Upon a book whose leaves are idly spread :
Gone—gone is he who well could understand
The kingly language of the mighty dead !
—There lies the flute that oft at twilight shed
Airs that beguiled the old man of his tears ;
But cold the master's touch—his skill is fled,
And all his innocent life at once appears
Like some sweet lovely tune that charmed in other years.

But now the door is opened soft and slow.
" The hour is come, and all the mourners wait
With heads uncovered in the courts below ! "
Stunned are the parents with these words of fate,
And bow their heads low down beneath the weight
Of one soul-sickening moment of despair !
Grief cometh deadly when it cometh late,
And with a Fury's hand delights to tear
From Eld's deep-furrowed front the thin and hoary hair.

His eyes are open, and with tearless gleam
Fixed on the coffin ! but they see it not,
Like haunted Guilt blind-walking in a dream,
With soul intent on its own secret blot.

The coffin moves !—yet rooted to the spot,
He sees it borne away, with vacant eyes,
Unconscious what it means ! hath even forgot
The name of Her who in a death-fit lies,—
His heart is turned to stone, nor heeds who lives or dies !

Lo ! now the Pall comes forth into the light
And one chill shudder thrills the weeping crowd !
There is it 'mid the sunshine black as night !
And soon to disappear—a passing cloud !
Grief can no longer bear—but bursts aloud !
Youth, manhood, age, one common nature sways,
And hoary heads across the pall are bowed
Near burnished locks where youthful beauty plays—
For all alike did love the Form that there decays !

List ! list ! a doleful dirge—a wild death-song !
The coffin now is placed upon its bier,
And through the echoing cloisters borne along !
—How touching those young voices thus to hear
Singing of sorrow, and of mortal fear
To their glad innocence as yet unknown !
Singing they weep—but transient every tear,
Nor may their spirits understand the groan
That age or manhood pours above the funeral stone.

Waileth more dolefully that passing psalm,
At every step they take towards the cell
That calls the coffin to eternal calm !
At each swing of the melancholy bell
More loud the sighing and the sobbing swell,
More ghostly paleness whitens every face !
Slow the procession moves—slow tolls that knell—
But yet the funeral at that solemn pace
Alas ! too soon will reach its final resting-place.

How Vernon loved to walk this cloistered shade
In silent musings, far into the night !
When o'er that Tower the rising Moon displayed
Not purer than his soul her cloudless light.
Still was his lamp-lit window burning bright,
A little earthly star that shone most sweet
To those in heaven—but now extinguished quite—
—Fast-chained are now those nightly-wand'ring feet
In bonds that none may burst—folds of the winding-sheet.

Wide is the chapel-gate, and entereth slow
With all its floating pomp that sable pall!
Silent as in a dream the funeral show
(For grief hath breathed one spirit into all)
Is ranged at once along the gloomy wall!
Ah me! what mournful lights athwart the gloom,
From yonder richly-pictured window fall!
And with a transitory smile illume
The dim-discovered depth of that damp breathless tomb.

All hearts turn shuddering from that gulf profound,
And momentary solace vainly seek
In gazing on the solemn objects round!
Those pictured saints with eyes uplifted meek
To the still heavens, how silently they speak
Of faith untroubled, sanctity divine—
While on the paleness of each placid cheek
We seem to see a holy lustre shine
O'er mortal beauty breathed from an immortal shrine!

What though beneath our feet the earthly mould
Of virtue, beauty, youth, and genius lie
In grim decay! Yet round us we behold
The cheering emblems of eternity.
What voice divine is theirs! If soul may die,
And nought its perishable glory save,
Unto yon marble face that to the sky
Looks up with humble hope, what feeling gave
Those smiles that speak of heaven, though kindling o'er a grave!

O holy image of the Son of God,*
Bearing his cross up toilsome Calvary!
Was that stern path for sinful mortals trod?
—Methinks from that calm cheek, and pitying eye
Uplifted to that grim and wrathful sky
(Dim for our sakes with a celestial tear),
Falls a sweet smile where Vernon's relics lie
In mortal stillness on the unmoving bier!
Seeming the bright spring-morn of heaven's eternal year.

—Down, down within oblivion's darksome brink
With lingering motion, as if every hand

* The Altar Piece.

Were loth to let the mournful burden sink,
The coffin disappears! The weeping band,
All round that gulf one little moment stand
In mute and black dismay—and scarcely know
What dire event has happened! the loose sand
From the vault-stone with dull drop sounds below,—
The grave's low hollow voice hath told the tale of woe!

Look for the last time down that cold damp gloom;
Of those bright letters take a farewell sight!
—Down falls the vault-stone on the yawning tomb,
And all below is sunk in sudden night!
Now is the chapel-aisle with sunshine bright,
The upper world is glad, and fresh and fair,
But that black stone repels the dancing light,—
The beams of heaven must never enter there,
Where by the mouldering corpse in darkness sits Despair!

Where now those tears, smiles, motions, looks, and tones,
That made our Vernon in his pride of place
So glorious and so fair? these sullen stones,
Like a frozen sea, lie o'er that beauteous face!
Soon will there be no solitary trace
Of him, his joys, his sadness, or his mirth!
Even now grows dim the memory of that grace
That halo-like shone round the soul of worth!
All fading like a dream! all vanishing from earth.

Where now the fancies wild—the thoughts benign
That raised his soul and purified his heart?
Where now have fled those impulses divine
That taught that gifted youth the Poet's art,
Stealing at midnight with a thrilling start
Into his spirit, wakeful with the pain
Of that mysterious joy? In darkness part
All the bright hopes, that in a glorious train
Lay round his soul, like clouds that hail the morning's reign!

Ah me! can sorrow such fair image bring
Before a mourner's eyes? Methinks I see,
Laden with all the glories of the spring,
Balm, brightness, music, a resplendent tree,
Waving its blossomed branches gloriously
Over a sunny garden of delight!
A cold north-wind comes wrathful from the sea,

And there at dawn of day a rueful sight!
As winter brown and sere, the glory once so bright.

I look into the mist of future years,
And gather comfort from the eternal law
That yields up manhood to a host of fears,
To blinded passion, and bewildering awe!
The exulting soul of Vernon never saw
Hope's ghastly visage by Truth laughed to scorn;
Imagination had not paused to draw
The gorgeous curtains of Life's sunny morn,
Nor showed the scenes behind so dismal and forlorn.

To thee, my Friend! as to a shining star
Through the blue depths a cloudless course was given;
There smiled thy soul, from earthly vapours far,
Serenely sparkling in its native heaven!
No clouds at last were o'er its beauty driven—
But as aloft it burned resplendently,
At once it faded from the face of even,
As oft before the nightly wanderer's eye
A star on which he gazed drops sudden from the sky!

Who comes to break my dreams? The chapel door
Is opening slow, and that old Man appears
With his long floating locks so silvery-hoar!
His frame is crouching, as if twenty years
Had passed in one short day! There are no tears
On his wan wrinkled face, or hollow eyes!
At last with pain his humbled head he rears,
And asks, while not one grief-choked voice replies,
"Show me the very stone 'neath which my Henry lies!"

He sees the scattered dust—and down he falls
Upon that pavement with a shuddering groan—
And with a faltering broken voice he calls
By that dear name upon his buried Son.
Then dumb he lies! and ever and anon
Fixes his eyeballs with a ghastly glow
On the damp blackness of that hideous stone,
As if he looked it through, and saw below
The dead face looking up as white as frozen snow!

O gently make way for that Lady fair!
How calm she walks along the solemn aisle!

Beneath the sad grace of that braided hair,
How still her brow! and what a holy smile!
One start she gives—and stops a little while,
When bowed by grief her husband's frame appears,
With reverend locks which the hard stones defile!
Then with the only voice that mourner hears,
Lifts up his hoary head and bathes it in her tears!

At last the funeral party melts away,
And as I look up from the chapel-floor,
No living object can my eyes survey,
Save these two childless Parents at the door,
Flinging back a wild farewell—then seen no more!
And now I hear my own slow footsteps sound
Along the echoing aisle—that tread is o'er—
And as with blinded eyes I turn me round,
The Sexton shuts the gate that stuns with thundering sound!

How fresh and cheerful laughs the open air
To one who has been standing by a tomb!
And yet the beauty that is glistening there
Flings back the unwilling soul into the gloom.
We turn from walls which dancing rays illume
Unto the darkness where we lately stood,
And still the image of that narrow room
Beneath the sunshine chills our very blood,
With the damp breathless air of mortal solitude.

O band of rosy children shouting loud,
With Morris-dance in honour of the May!
Restrain that laughter, ye delighted crowd,
Let one sad hour disturb your holiday.
Ye drop your flowers, and wonder who are they
With garb so black and cheeks of deadly hue!
With one consent then rush again to play,
For what hath Sadness, Sorrow, Death to do,
Beneath that sunny sky with that light-hearted crew!

And now the Parents have left far behind
The gorgeous City with its groves and bowers,
The funeral toll pursues them on the wind,
And looking back, a cloud of thunder lowers
In mortal darkness o'er the shining towers,

That glance like fire at every sunny gleam!
Within that glorious scene, what hideous hours
Dragged their dire length! tower, palace, temple swim,
Before their wildered brain—a grand but dreadful dream!

Say who will greet them at their Castle-gate?
A silent line in sable garb arrayed,
The ancient servants of the House will wait!
Up to those woe-worn visages afraid
To lift their gaze! while on the tower displayed,
A rueful scutcheon meets the Father's eye,
Hung out by death when beauty had decayed,
And sending far into the sunless sky
The mortal gloom that shrouds its dark emblazonry.

Oh! black as death yon pine-grove on the hill!
Yon waterfall hath now a dismal roar!
Why is that little lake so sadly still,
So dim the flowers and trees along the shore?
'Tis not in vernal sunshine to restore
Their faded beauty, for the source of light
That warmed the primrose-bank doth flow no more!
Vain Nature's power! for unto Sorrow's sight
No dewy flower is fair, no blossomy tree is bright.

—Five years have travelled by—since side by side
That aged pair were laid in holy ground!
With them the very name of Vernon died,
And now it seemeth like an alien sound,
Where once it shed bright smiles and blessings round!
Another race dwell in that ancient Hall,
Nor one memorial of that youth is found
Save his sweet Picture—now unknown to all—
That smiles, and long will smile neglected on the wall.

But not forgotten in that lofty clime,
Where starlike once thy radiant spirit shone,
Art thou, my Vernon! 'mid those courts sublime
The mournful music of thy name is known.
Oxford still glories in her gifted Son,
And grey-haired men who speak of days gone by
Recount what noble palms by him were won,
Describe his step, his mien, his voice, his eye,
Till tears will oft rush in to close his eulogy.

In the dim silence of the Chapel-aisle
His Image stands! with pale but life-like face!
The cold white marble breathes a heavenly smile,
The still locks cluster with a mournful grace.
O ne'er may time that beauteous bust deface!
There may it smile through ages far away,
On those, who, walking through that holy place,
A moment pause that Image to survey,
And read with softened soul the monumental lay.

TO A SLEEPING CHILD.

Art thou a thing of mortal birth,
Whose happy home is on our earth?
Does human blood with life imbue
Those wandering veins of heavenly blue,
That stray along thy forehead fair,
Lost 'mid a gleam of golden hair?
Oh! can that light and airy breath
Steal from a being doomed to death;
Those features to the grave be sent
In sleep thus mutely eloquent;
Or, art thou, what thy form would seem,
The phantom of a blessed dream?
A human shape I feel thou art,
I feel it, at my beating heart,
Those tremors both of soul and sense
Awoke by infant innocence!
Though dear the forms by fancy wove,
We love them with a transient love;
Thoughts from the living world intrude
Even on her deepest solitude:
But, lovely child! thy magic stole
At once into my inmost soul,
With feelings as thy beauty fair,
And left no other vision there.

To me thy parents are unknown;
Glad would they be their child to own!
And well they must have loved before,
If since thy birth they loved not more.
Thou art a branch of noble stem,
And, seeing thee, I figure them.
What many a childless one would give,
If thou in their still home wouldst live!
Though in thy face no family-line
Might sweetly say, "This babe is mine!"

In time thou wouldst become the same
As their own child,—all but the name!

How happy must thy parents be
Who daily live in sight of thee!
Whose hearts no greater pleasure seek
Than see thee smile, and hear thee speak,
And feel all natural griefs beguiled
By thee, their fond, their duteous child.
What joy must in their souls have stirred
When thy first broken words were heard,
Words, that, inspired by Heaven, expressed
The transports dancing in thy breast!
As for thy smile!—thy lip, cheek, brow,
Even while I gaze, are kindling now.

I called thee duteous; am I wrong?
No! truth, I feel, is in my song:
Duteous thy heart's still beatings move
To God, to Nature, and to Love!
To God! for thou a harmless child
Hast kept His temple undefiled:
To Nature! for thy tears and sighs
Obey alone her mysteries:
To Love!—for fiends of hate might see
Thou dwell'st in love, and love in thee!
What wonder then, though in thy dreams
Thy face with mystic meaning beams!

Oh! that my spirit's eye could see
Whence burst those gleams of ecstasy!
That light of dreaming soul appears
To play from thoughts above thy years.
Thou smilest as if thy soul were soaring
To Heaven, and Heaven's God adoring!
And who can tell what visions high
May bless an infant's sleeping eye?
What brighter throne can brightness find
To reign on than an infant's mind,
Ere sin destroy, or error dim,
The glory of the Seraphim?

But now thy changing smiles express
Intelligible happiness.
I feel my soul thy soul partake.
What grief! if thou shouldst now awake!

With infants happy as thyself
I see thee bound, a playful elf:
I see thou art a darling child
Among thy playmates, bold and wild.
They love thee well; thou art the queen
Of all their sports, in bower or green;
And if thou livest to woman's height,
In thee will friendship, love delight.

And live thou surely must; thy life
Is far too spiritual for the strife
Of mortal pain, nor could disease
Find heart to prey on smiles like these.
Oh! thou wilt be an angel bright!
To those thou lovest, a saving light!
The staff of age, the help sublime
Of erring youth, and stubborn prime;
And when thou goest to Heaven again,
Thy vanishing be like the strain
Of airy harp, so soft the tone
The ear scarce knows when it is gone!

Thrice blessèd he! whose stars design
His spirit pure to lean on thine;
And watchful share, for days and years,
Thy sorrows, joys, sighs, smiles, and tears!
For good and guiltless as thou art,
Some transient griefs will touch thy heart,
Griefs that along thy altered face
Will breathe a more subduing grace,
Than ev'n those looks of joy that lie
On the soft cheek of infancy.
Though looks, God knows, are cradled there
That guilt might cleanse, or soothe despair.

Oh! vision fair! that I could be
Again, as young, as pure as thee!
Vain wish! the rainbow's radiant form
May view, but cannot brave the storm;
Years can bedim the gorgeous dyes
That paint the bird of paradise,
And years, so fate hath ordered, roll
Clouds o'er the summer of the soul.
Yet, sometimes, sudden sights of grace,
Such as the gladness of thy face,

O sinless babe! by God are given
To charm the wanderer back to Heaven.

No common impulse hath me led
To this green spot, thy quiet bed,
Where, by mere gladness overcome,
In sleep thou dreamest of thy home.
When to the lake I would have gone,
A wondrous beauty drew me on,
Such beauty as the spirit sees
In glittering fields, and moveless trees,
After a warm and silent shower,
Ere falls on earth the twilight hour.
What led me hither, all can say,
Who, knowing God, his will obey.

Thy slumbers now cannot be long:
Thy little dreams become too strong
For sleep—too like realities:
Soon shall I see those hidden eyes!
Thou wak'st, and, starting from the ground,
In dear amazement look'st around
Like one who, little given to roam,
Wonders to find herself from home!
But when a stranger meets thy view,
Glistens thine eye with wilder hue.
A moment's thought who I may be,
Blends with thy smiles of courtesy.

Fair was that face as break of dawn,
When o'er its beauty sleep was drawn
Like a thin veil that half-concealed
The light of soul, and half-revealed.
While thy hushed heart with visions wrought,
Each trembling eyelash moved with thought,
And things we dream, but ne'er can speak,
Like clouds came floating o'er thy cheek,
Such summer-clouds as travel light,
When the soul's heaven lies calm and bright;
Till thou awok'st,—then to thine eye
Thy whole heart leapt in ecstasy!

And lovely is that heart of thine,
Or sure these eyes could never shine

With such a wild, yet bashful glee,
Gay, half-o'ercome timidity!
Nature has breathed into thy face
A spirit of unconscious grace;
A spirit that lies never still,
And makes thee joyous 'gainst thy will.
As, sometimes o'er a sleeping lake
Soft airs a gentle rippling make,
Till, ere we know, the strangers fly,
And water blends again with sky.

Oh! happy sprite! didst thou but know
What pleasures through my being flow
From thy soft eyes, a holier feeling
From their blue light could ne'er be stealing,
But thou wouldst be more loth to part,
And give me more of that glad heart!
Oh! gone thou art! and bearest hence
The glory of thy innocence.
But with deep joy I breathe the air
That kissed thy cheek, and fanned thy hair,
And feel though fate our lives must sever,
Yet shall thy image live for ever!

ADDRESS TO A WILD DEER

IN THE FOREST OF DALNESS, ARGYLLSHIRE.

MAGNIFICENT Creature! so stately and bright!
In the pride of thy spirit pursuing thy flight;
For what hath the child of the desert to dread,
Wafting up his own mountains that far-beaming head;
Or borne like a whirlwind down on the vale?—
Hail! King of the wild and the beautiful!—hail!
Hail! Idol divine!—whom Nature hath borne
O'er a hundred hill-tops since the mists of the morn,
Whom the pilgrim lone wandering on mountain and moor,
As the vision glides by him, may blameless adore;
For the joy of the happy, the strength of the free
Are spread in a garment of glory o'er thee.

Up! up to yon cliff! like a King to his throne!
O'er the black silent forest piled lofty and lone—
A throne which the eagle is glad to resign
Unto footsteps so fleet and so fearless as thine.
There the bright heather springs up in love of thy breast—
Lo! the clouds in the depth of the sky are at rest;
And the race of the wild winds is o'er on the hill!
In the hush of the mountains, ye antlers lie still—
Though your branches now toss in the storm of delight,
Like the arms of the pine on yon shelterless height.
One moment—thou bright Apparition!—delay!
Then melt o'er the crags, like the sun from the day.

Aloft on the weather-gleam, scorning the earth,
The wild spirit hung in majestical mirth:
In dalliance with danger, he bounded in bliss,
O'er the fathomless gloom of each moaning abyss;
O'er the grim rocks careering with prosperous motion,
Like a ship by herself in full sail o'er the ocean!

Then proudly he turned ere he sank to the dell,
And shook from his forehead a haughty farewell,
While his horns in a crescent of radiance shone,
Like a flag burning bright when the vessel is gone.

The ship of the desert hath passed on the wind,
And left the dark ocean of mountains behind!
But my spirit will travel wherever she flee,
And behold her in pomp o'er the rim of the sea—
Her voyage pursue—till her anchor be cast
In some cliff-girdled haven of beauty at last.

What lonely magnificence stretches around!
Each sight how sublime! and how awful each sound!
All hushed and serene, as a region of dreams,
The mountains repose 'mid the roar of the streams,
Their glens of black umbrage by cataracts riven,
But calm their blue tops in the beauty of Heaven.
Here the glory of nature hath nothing to fear—
Ay! Time the destroyer in power hath been here;
And the forest that hung on yon mountain so high,
Like a black thunder-cloud on the arch of the sky,
Hath gone, like that cloud, when the tempest came by.
Deep sunk in the black moor, all worn and decayed,
Where the floods have been raging, the limbs are displayed
Of the Pine-tree and Oak sleeping vast in the gloom,
The kings of the forest disturbed in their tomb.

E'en now, in the pomp of their prime, I behold
O'erhanging the desert the forests of old!
So gorgeous their verdure, so solemn their shade,
Like the heavens above them, they never may fade.
The sunlight is on them—in silence they sleep—
A glimmering glow, like the breast of the deep,
When the billows scarce heave in the calmness of morn.
—Down the pass of Glen-Etive the tempest is borne,
And the hill-side is swinging, and roars with a sound
In the heart of the forest embosomed profound,
Till all in a moment the tumult is o'er,
And the mountain of thunder is still as the shore
When the sea is at ebb; not a leaf nor a breath
To disturb the wild solitude, steadfast as death.

From his eyrie the eagle hath soared with a scream,
And I wake on the edge of the cliff from my dream;

—Where now is the light of thy far-beaming brow?
Fleet son of the wilderness! where art thou now?
—Again o'er yon crag thou return'st to my sight,
Like the horns of the moon from a cloud of the night!
Serene on thy travel—as soul in a dream—
Thou needest no bridge o'er the rush of the stream.
With thy presence the pine-grove is filled, as with light,
And the caves, as thou passest, one moment are bright.
Through the arch of the rainbow that lies on the rock
'Mid the mist stealing up from the cataract's shock,
Thou fling'st thy bold beauty, exulting and free,
O'er a pit of grim blackness, that roars like the sea.

His voyage is o'er!—As if struck by a spell
He motionless stands in the hush of the dell,
There softly and slowly sinks down on his breast,
In the midst of his pastime enamoured of rest.
A stream in a clear pool that endeth its race—
A dancing ray chained to one sunshiny place—
A cloud by the winds to calm solitude driven—
A hurricane dead in the silence of heaven!

Fit couch of repose for a pilgrim like thee!
Magnificent prison enclosing the free!
With rock-wall encircled—with precipice crowned—.
Which, awoke by the sun, thou can'st clear at a bound.
'Mid the fern and the heather kind Nature doth keep
One bright spot of green for her favourite's sleep;
And close to that covert, as clear as the skies
When their blue depths are cloudless, a little lakes lies,
Where the creature at rest can his image behold
Looking up through the radiance, as bright and as bold!
How lonesome! how wild! yet the wildness is rife
With the stir of enjoyment—the spirit of life.
The glad fish leaps up in the heart of the lake,
Whose depths, at the sullen plunge, sullenly quake!
Elate on the fern-branch the grasshopper sings,
And away in the midst of his roundelay springs;
'Mid the flowers of the heath, not more bright than himself,
The wild-bee is busy, a musical elf—
Then starts from his labour, unwearied and gay,
And, circling the antlers, booms far far away.
While high up the mountains, in silence remote,
The cuckoo unseen is repeating his note,

And mellowing echo, on watch in the skies,
Like a voice from some loftier climate replies.
With wide-branching antlers a guard to his breast,
There lies the wild Creature, even stately in rest!
'Mid the grandeur of nature, composed and serene,
And proud in his heart of the mountainous scene,
He lifts his calm eye to the eagle and raven,
At noon sinking down on smooth wings to their haven,
As if in his soul the bold Animal smiled
To his friends of the sky, the joint-heirs of the wild.

Yes! fierce looks thy nature, even hushed in repose—
In the depth of thy desert regardless of foes.
Thy bold antlers call on the hunter afar
With a haughty defiance to come to the war!
No outrage is war to a creature like thee!
The bugle-horn fills thy wild spirit with glee,
As thou bearest thy neck on the wings of the wind,
And the laggardly gaze-hound is toiling behind.
In the beams of thy forehead that glitter with death,
In feet that draw power from the touch of the heath,—
In the wide-raging torrent that lends thee its roar,—
In the cliff that once trod must be trodden no more,—
Thy trust—'mid the dangers that threaten thy reign!
—But what if the stag on the mountain be slain?
On the brink of the rock—lo! he standeth at bay
Like a victor that falls at the close of the day—
While hunter and hound in their terror retreat
From the death that is spurned from his furious feet:
And his last cry of anger comes back from the skies,
As nature's fierce son in the wilderness dies.
High life of a hunter! he meets on the hill
The new-wakened daylight, so bright and so still;
And feels, as the clouds of the morning unroll,
The silence, the splendour, ennoble his soul.
'Tis his o'er the mountains to stalk like a ghost,
Enshrouded with mist, in which nature is lost,
Till he lifts up his eyes, and flood, valley, and height,
In one moment all swim in an ocean of light;
While the sun, like a glorious banner unfurled,
Seems to wave o'er a new, more magnificent world.
'Tis his—by the mouth of some cavern his seat—
The lightning of heaven to hold at his feet,
While the thunder below him that growls from the cloud,
To him comes on echo more awfully loud.

When the clear depth of noontide, with glittering motion,
O'erflows the lone glens—an aërial ocean—
When the earth and the heavens, in union profound,
Lie blended in beauty that knows not a sound—
As his eyes in the sunshiny solitude close
'Neath a rock of the desert in dreaming repose,
He sees, in his slumbers, such visions of old
As his wild Gaelic songs to his infancy told;
O'er the mountains a thousand plumed hunters are borne,
And he starts from his dream at the blast of the horn.
Yes! child of the desert! fit quarry wert thou
For the hunter that came with a crown on his brow,—
By princes attended with arrow and spear,
In their white-tented camp, for the warfare of deer.
In splendour the tents on the green summit stood,
And brightly they shone from the glade in the wood,
And, silently built by a magical spell,
The pyramid rose in the depth of the dell.
All mute was the palace of Lochy that day,
When the king and his nobles—a gallant array—
To Gleno or Glen-Etive came forth in their pride,
And a hundred fierce stags in their solitude died.
Not lonely and single they passed o'er the height—
But thousands swept by in their hurricane-flight;
And bowed to the dust in their trampling tread
Was the plumage on many a warrior's head.
—"Fall down on your faces!—the herd is at hand!"
—And onwards they came like the sea o'er the sand;
Like the snow from the mountain when loosened by rain,
And rolling along with a crash to the plain;
Like a thunder-split oak-tree, that falls in one shock
With his hundred wide arms from the top of the rock,
Like the voice of the sky, when the black cloud is near,
So sudden, so loud, came the tempest of Deer.
Wild mirth of the desert! fit pastime for kings!
Which still the rude Bard in his solitude sings.
Oh reign of magnificence! vanished for ever!
Like music dried up in the bed of a river,
Whose course hath been changed! yet my soul can survey
The clear cloudless morn of that glorious day.
Yes! the wide silent forest is loud as of yore,
And the far-ebbèd grandeur rolls back to the shore.

I wake from my trance!—lo! the Sun is declining!
And the Black-mount afar in his lustre is shining,

—One soft golden gleam ere the twilight prevail !
Then down let me sink to the cot in the dale,
Where sings the fair maid to the viol so sweet,
Or the floor is alive with her white twinkling feet.
Down, down like a bird to the depth of the dell !
—Vanished Creature ! I bid thy fair image farewell !

A LAY OF FAIRY LAND.

It is upon the Sabbath-day, at rising of the sun,
That to Glenmore's black forest-side a Shepherdess hath gone,
From eagle and from raven to guard her little flock,
And read her Bible as she sits on greensward or on rock.

Her Widow-mother wept to hear her whispered prayer so sweet,
Then through the silence blessed the sound of her soft parting feet;
And thought, "while thou art praising God amid the hills so calm,
Far off this broken voice, my child! will join the morning psalm."

So down upon her rushy couch her moistened cheek she laid,
And away into the morning hush is flown her Highland Maid;
In heaven the stars are all bedimmed, but in its dewy mirth
A star more beautiful than they is shining on the earth.

—In the deep mountain-hollow the dreamy day is done,
For close the peace of Sabbath brings the rise and set of sun;
The mother through her lowly door looks forth unto the green,
Yet the shadow of her Shepherdess is nowhere to be seen.

Within her loving bosom stirs one faint throb of fear—
"Oh! why so late!" a footstep—and she knows her child is near;
So out into the evening the gladdened mother goes,
And between her and the crimson light her daughter's beauty glows.

The heather-balm is fragrant—the heather-bloom is fair,
But 'tis neither heather-balm nor bloom that wreathes round Mhairi's hair;
Round her white brows so innocent, and her blue quiet eyes,
That look out bright, in smiling light, beneath the flowery dyes.

These flowers by far too beautiful among our hills to grow,
These gem-crowned stalks too tender to bear one flake of snow,
Not all the glens of Caledon could yield so bright a band,
That in its lustre breathes and blooms of some warm foreign land.

"The hawk hath long been sleeping upon the pillar-stone,
And what hath kept my Mhairi in the moorlands all alone?
And where got she those lovely flowers mine old eyes dimly see?
Where'er they grew, it must have been upon a lovely tree."

"Sit down beneath our elder-shade, and I my tale will tell"—
And speaking, on her mother's lap the wondrous chaplet fell;
It seemed as if its blissful breath did her worn heart restore,
Till the faded eyes of age did beam as they had beamed of yore.

"The day was something dim—but the gracious sunshine fell
On me, and on my sheep and lambs, and our own little dell;
Some lay down in the warmth, and some began to feed,
And I took out the Holy Book, and thereupon did read.

"And while that I was reading of Him who for us died,
And blood and water shed for us from out His blessèd side,
An angel's voice above my head came singing o'er and o'er,
In Abernethy-wood it sank, now rose in dark Glenmore.

"Mid lonely hills, on Sabbath, all by myself, to hear
That voice, unto my beating heart did bring a joyful fear;
For well I knew the wild song that wavered o'er my head,
Must be from some celestial thing, or from the happy dead.

"I looked up from my Bible—and lo! before me stood,
In her green graceful garments, the Lady of the Wood;
Silent she was and motionless, but when her eyes met mine,
I knew she came to do me good, her smile was so divine.

"She laid her hand as soft as light upon your daughter's hair,
And up that white arm flowed my heart into her bosom fair;
And all at once I loved her well as she my mate had been,
Though she had come from Fairy-Land and was the Fairy-Queen."

Then started Mhairi's mother at that wild word of fear,
For a daughter had been lost to her for many a hopeless year;
The child had gone at sunrise among the hills to roam,
But many a sunset since had been, and none hath brought her home.

Some thought that Fhaum, the savage shape that on the mountain
dwells,
Had somewhere left her lying dead among the heather-bells,
And others said the River red had caught her in her glee,
And her fair body swept unseen into the unseen Sea.

But thoughts come to a mother's breast a mother only knows,
And grief, although it never dies, in fancy finds repose;
By day she feels the dismal truth that death has ta'en her child,
At night she hears her singing still and dancing o'er the wild.

And then her Country's legends lend all their lovely faith,
Till sleep reveals a silent land, but not a land of death—
Where, happy in her innocence, her living child doth play
With those fair Elves that wafted her from her own world away.

"Look not so mournful, mother! 'tis not a Tale of woe—
The Fairy-Queen stooped down and left a kiss upon my brow,
And faster than mine own two doves e'er stooped unto my hand,
Our flight was through the ether—then we dropt on Fairy-Land.

"Along a river-side that ran wide-winding through a wood,
We walked, the Fairy-Queen and I, in loving solitude;
And there serenely on the trees, in all their rich attire,
Sat crested birds whose plumage seemed to burn with harmless fire.

"No sound was in our steps,—as on the ether mute—
For the velvet moss lay greenly deep beneath the gliding foot,
Till we came to a Waterfall, and 'mid the Rainbows there,
The Mermaids and the Fairies played in Water and in Air.

"And sure there was sweet singing, for it at once did breathe
From all the Woods and Waters, and from the Caves beneath,
But when those happy creatures beheld their lovely Queen,
The music died away at once, as if it ne'er had been,—

"And hovering in the Rainbow, and floating on the Wave,
Each little head so beautiful some show of homage gave,
And bending down bright lengths of hair that glistened in its dew,
Seemed as the Sun ten thousand rays against the Water threw.

"Soft the music rose again—but we left it far behind,
Though strains o'ertook us now and then, on some small breath of wind;
Our guide into that brightening bliss was aye that brightening stream,
Till lo! a Palace silently unfolded like a dream.

"Then thought I of the lovely tales, and music lovelier still,
My elder sister used to sing at evening on the Hill,
When I was but a little child too young to watch the sheep,
And on her kind knees laid my head in very joy to sleep.

"Tales of the silent people, and their green silent Land!
—But the gates of that bright Palace did suddenly expand,
And filled with green-robed Fairies was seen an ample hall,
Where she who held my hand in hers was the loveliest of them all.

"Round her in happy heavings flowed that bright glistering crowd,
Yet though a thousand voices hailed, the murmur was not loud,
And o'er their plumed and flowery heads there sang a whispering breeze,
When as before their Queen all sank, down slowly on their knees.

"Then said the Queen, 'Seven years to-day since mine own infant's birth—
And we must send her Nourice this evening back to earth;
Though sweet her home beneath the sun—far other home than this—
So I have brought her sister small, to see her in her bliss.

"'Luhana! bind thy frontlet upon my Mhairi's brow,
That she on earth may show the flowers that in our gardens grow.'
And from the heavenly odours breathed around my head I knew
How delicate must be their shape, how beautiful their hue!

"Then near and nearer still I heard small peals of laughter sweet,
And the infant Fay came dancing in with her white twinkling feet,
While in green rows the smiling Elves fell back on either side,
And up that avenue the Fay did like a sunbeam glide.

"But who came then into the Hall? One long since mourned as dead!
Oh! never had the mould been strewn o'er such a starlike head!
On me alone she poured her voice, on me alone her eyes,
And, as she gazed, I thought upon the deep-blue cloudless skies.

"Well knew I my fair sister! and her unforgotten face!
Strange meeting one so beautiful in that bewildering place!
And like two solitary rills that by themselves flowed on,
And had been long divided—we melted into one.

"When that the shower was all wept out of our delightful tears,
And love rose in our hearts that had been buried there for years,
You well may think another shower straightway began to fall,
Even for our mother and our home to leave that heavenly Hall.

"I may not tell the sobbing and weeping that was there,
And how the mortal Nourice left her Fairy in despair,

But promised, duly every year, to visit the sad child,
As soon as by our forest-side the first pale primrose smiled.

" While they two were embracing, the Palace it was gone,
And I and my dear sister stood by the Great Burial-stone ;
While both of us our river saw in twilight glimmering by,
And knew at once the dark Cairngorm in his own silent sky."

The Child hath long been speaking to one who may not hear,
For a deadly Joy came suddenly upon a deadly Fear,
And though the Mother fell not down, she lay on Mhairi's breast,
And her face was white as that of one whose soul has gone to rest.

She sits beneath the Elder-shade in that long mortal swoon,
And piteously on her wan cheek looks down the gentle Moon ;
And when her senses are restored, whom sees she at her side,
But Her believed in childhood to have wandered off and died !

In these small hands, so lily-white, is water from the spring,
And a grateful coolness drops from it as from an angel's wing,
And to her Mother's pale lips her rosy lips are laid,
While these long soft eyelashes drop tears on her hoary head.

She stirs not in her Child's embrace, but yields her old grey hairs
Unto the heavenly dew of tears, the heavenly breath of prayers—
No voice hath she to bless her child, till that strong fit go by,
But gazeth on the long lost face, and then upon the sky.

The Sabbath-morn was beautiful — and the long Sabbath-day—
The Evening-star rose beautiful when daylight died away ;
Morn, day, and twilight, this lone Glen flowed over with delight,
But the fulness of all mortal Joy hath blessed the Sabbath-night.

A CHURCHYARD SCENE.

How sweet and solemn, all alone,
With reverend steps, from stone to stone
In a small village churchyard lying,
O'er intervening flowers to move!
And as we read the names unknown
Of young and old to judgment gone,
And hear in the calm air above
Time onwards softly flying,
To meditate, in Christian love,
Upon the dead and dying!
Across the silence seem to go
With dreamlike motion, wavering, slow,
And shrouded in their folds of snow,
The friends we loved long long ago!
Gliding across the sad retreat,
How beautiful their phantom feet!
What tenderness is in their eyes,
Turned where the poor survivor lies
'Mid monitory sanctities!
What years of vanished joy are fanned
From one uplifting of that hand
In its white stillness! when the Shade
Doth glimmeringly in sunshine fade
From our embrace, how dim appears
This world's life through a mist of tears!
Vain hopes! blind sorrows! needless fears!

Such is the scene around me now:
A little Churchyard on the brow
Of a green pastoral hill;
Its sylvan village sleeps below,
And faintly here is heard the flow
Of Woodburn's summer rill;
A place where all things mournful meet,
And yet the sweetest of the sweet,
The stillest of the still!

With what a pensive beauty fall
Across the mossy mouldering wall
That rose-tree's clustered arches! See
The robin-redbreast warily,
Bright through the blossoms, leaves his nest:
Sweet ingrate! through the winter blest
At the firesides of men—but shy
Through all the sunny summer hours,
He hides himself among the flowers
In his own wild festivity.
What lulling sound, and shadow cool
Hangs half the darkened churchyard o'er
From thy green depths so beautiful,
Thou gorgeous sycamore!
Oft hath the holy wine and bread
Been blest beneath thy murmuring tent,
Where many a bright and hoary head
Bowed at that awful sacrament.
Now all beneath the turf are laid
On which they sat, and sang, and prayed.
Above that consecrated tree
Ascends the tapering spire that seems
To lift the soul up silently
To heaven with all its dreams,
While in the belfry, deep and low,
From his heaved bosom's purple gleams
The dove's continuous murmurs flow,
A dirge-like song, half-bliss, half-woe,
The voice so lonely seems!

THE WIDOW.

The courtly hall is gleaming bright
With fashion's graceful throng---
All hearts are chained in still delight,
For like the heaven-borne voice of night
Breathes Handel's sacred song.
Nor on my spirit melts in vain
The deep—the wild—the mournful strain
That fills the echoing hall
(Though many a callous soul be there)
With sighs, and sobs, and cherished pain—
While on a face, as Seraph's fair,
Mine eyes in sadness fall.

Not those the tears that smiling flow
As fancied sorrow bleeds,
Like dew upon the rose's glow ;
—That Lady 'mid the glittering show
Is clothed in widow's weeds.
She sits in reverie profound,
And drinks and lives upon the sound,
As if she ne'er would wake !
Her closed eyes cannot hold the tears
That tell what dreams her soul have bound—
In memory they of other years
For a dead husband's sake.

Methinks her inmost soul lies spread
Before my tearful sight—
A garden whose best flowers are dead,
A sky still fair (though darkened)
With hues of lingering light.
I see the varying feelings chase
Each other o'er her pallid face,
From shade to deepest gloom.

She thinks on living objects dear,
And pleasure lends a cheerful grace;
But oh! that look so dim and drear,
—Her heart is in the tomb.

Rivalling the tender crescent Moon
The Star of evening shines—
A warm, still, balmy night of June,
Low-murmuring with a fitful tune
From yonder grove of pines.
In the silence of that starry sky,
Exchanging vows of constancy,
Two happy lovers stray.
—To her how sad and strange! to know,
In darkness while the phantoms fade,
That one a widowed wretch is now,
The other in the clay.

A wilder gleam disturbs her eye.
Oh! hush the deep'ning strain!
And must the youthful Warrior die?
A gorgeous funeral passes by,
The dead-march stuns her brain.
The singing voice she hears no more,
Across his grave the thunders roar!
How weeps yon gallant band
O'er him their valour could not save!
For the bayonet is red with gore,
And he, the beautiful and brave,
Now sleeps in Egypt's sand.

But far away in cloud and mist
The ghastly vision swims.
—Unto that dying cadence list!
She thinks the voices of the blest
Now chant their evening hymns.
O for a dove's unwearied wing,
That she might fly where angels sing
Around the judgment-seat;
That Spirit pure to kiss again,
And smile at earthly sorrowing!
Washed free from every mortal stain,
At Jesus' blessèd feet.

How longs her spirit to recall
That prayer so vain and wild!
For, idly-wandering round the Hall,
Her eyes are startled as they fall
On her own beauteous Child.
Gazing on one so good and fair,
Less mournful breathes that holy air,
And almost melts to mirth:
Pleased will she sojourn here a while,
And see, beneath her pious care,
In heaven's most gracious sunshine smile
The sweetest Flower on earth.

The song dies 'mid the silent strings,
And the Hall is now alive
With a thousand gay and fluttering things;
—The noise to her a comfort brings,
Her heart and soul revive.
With solemn pace and loving pride
She walks by her fair daughter's side,
Who views with young delight
The gaudy sparkling revelry,—
Unconscious that from far and wide
On her is turned each charmèd eye—
The Beauty of the night!

A Spirit she! and Joy her name!
She walks upon the air;
Grace swims throughout her fragile frame,
And glistens like a lambent flame,
Amid her golden hair.
Her eyes are of the heavenly blue,
A cloudless twilight bathed in dew;
The blushes on her cheek,
Like the roses of the vernal year
That lend the virgin snow their hue—
And oh! what pure delight to hear
The gentle Vision speak!

Yet dearer than that rosy glow
To me yon cheek so wan;
Lovely I thought it long ago,

But lovelier far now blanched with woe
Like the breast-down of the swan.
Then worship ye the sweet—the young—
Hang on the witchcraft of her tongue,
Wild-murmuring like the lute.
On thee, O Lady ! let me gaze,
Thy soul is now a lyre unstrung,
But I hear the voice of other days,
Though these pale lips be mute.

Lovely thou art ! yet none may dare
That placid soul to move.
Most beautiful thy braided hair,
But awful holiness breathes there
Unmeet for earthly love.
More touching far than deep distress
Thy smiles of languid happiness,
That like the gleams of Even
O'er thy calm cheek serenely play.
—Thus at the silent hour we bless,
Unmindful of the joyous day,
The still sad face of Heaven.

HYMN TO SPRING.

How beautiful the pastime of the Spring!
Lo! newly waking from her wintry dream,
She, like a smiling infant, timid plays
On the green margin of this sunny lake,
Fearing, by starts, the little breaking waves
(If ripplings rather known by sound than sight
May haply so be named) that in the grass
Soon fade in murmuring mirth; now seeming proud
To venture round the edge of yon far point,
That from an eminence softly sinking down,
Doth from the wide and homeless waters shape
A scene of tender, delicate repose,
Fit haunt for thee, in thy first hours of joy,
Delightful Spring!—nor less an emblem fair,
Like thee, of beauty, innocence, and youth.

On such a day, 'mid such a scene as this,
Methinks the poets who in lovely hymns
Have sung thy reign, sweet Power, and wished it long,
In their warm hearts conceived those eulogies
That, lending to the world inanimate
A pulse and spirit of life, for aye preserve
The sanctity of Nature, and embalm
Her fleeting spectacles in memory's cell
In spite of time's mutations. Onwards roll
The circling seasons, and as each gives birth
To dreams peculiar, yea destructive oft
Of former feelings, in oblivion's shade
Sleep the fair visions of forgotten hours.
But Nature calls the poet to her aid,
And in his lays beholds her glory live
For ever. Thus, in winter's deepest gloom,
When all is dim before the outward eye,
Nor the ear catches one delightful sound,
They who have wandered in their musing walks

With the great poets, in their spirits feel
No change on earth, but see the unaltered woods
Laden with beauty, and inhale the song
Of birds, airs, echoes, and of vernal showers.

So hath it been with me, delightful Spring!
And now I hail thee as a friend who pays
An annual visit, yet whose image lives
From parting to return, and who is blest
Each time with blessings warmer than before.

Oh! gracious Power! for thy beloved approach
The expecting earth lay wrapt in kindling smiles,
Struggling with tears, and often overcome.
A blessing sent before thee from the heavens,
A balmy spirit breathing tenderness,
Prepared thy way, and all created things
Felt that the angel of delight was near.
Thou camest at last, and such a heavenly smile
Shone round thee, as beseemed the eldest-born
Of Nature's guardian spirits. The great Sun,
Scattering the clouds with a resistless smile,
Came forth to do thee homage; a sweet hymn
Was by the low Winds chanted in the sky;
And when thy feet descended on the earth,
Scarce could they move amid the clustering flowers
By Nature strewn o'er valley, hill, and field,
To hail her blest deliverer!—Ye fair Trees,
How are ye changed, and changing while I gaze!
It seems as if some gleam of verdant light
Fell on you from a rainbow; but it lives
Amid your tendrils, brightening every hour
Into a deeper radiance. Ye sweet Birds,
Were you asleep through all the wintry hours,
Beneath the waters, or in mossy caves?
There are, 'tis said, birds that pursue the spring,
Where'er she flies, or else in deathlike sleep
Abide her annual reign, when forth they come
With freshened plumage and enraptured song,
As ye do now, unwearied choristers,
Till the land ring with joy. Yet are ye not,
Sporting in tree and air, more beautiful
Than the young lambs, that from the valley-side
Send a soft bleating like an infant's voice,
Half happy, half afraid! O blessèd things!

At sight of this your perfect innocence,
The sterner thoughts of manhood melt away
Into a mood as mild as woman's dreams.
The strife of working intellect, the stir
Of hopes ambitious; the disturbing sound
Of fame, and all that worshipped pageantry
That ardent spirits burn for in their pride,
Fly like disparting clouds, and leave the soul
Pure and serene as the blue depths of heaven.

Now is the time in some meek solitude
To hold communion with those innocent thoughts
That blessed our earlier days;—to list the voice
Of Conscience murmuring from her inmost shrine,
And learn if still she sing the quiet tune
That filled the ear of youth. If then we feel,
That 'mid the powers, the passions, and desires
Of riper age, we still have kept our hearts
Free from pollution, and 'mid tempting scenes
Walked on with pure and unreprovèd steps,
Fearless of guilt, as if we knew it not;
Ah me! with what a new sublimity
Will the green hills lift up their sunny heads,
Ourselves as stately: Smiling will we gaze
On the clouds whose happy home is in the heavens;
Nor envy the clear streamlet that pursues
His course 'mid flowers and music to the sea.
But dread the beauty of a vernal day,
Thou trembler before memory! To the saint
What sight so lovely as the angel form
That smiles upon his sleep! The sinner veils
His face ashamed,—unable to endure
The upbraiding silence of the seraph's eyes!—

Yet awful must it be, even to the best
And wisest man, when he beholds the sun
Prepared once more to run his annual round
Of glory and of love, and thinks that God
To him, though sojourning in earthly shades,
Hath also given an orbit, whence his light
May glad the nations, or at least diffuse
Peace and contentment over those he loves!
His soul expanded by the breath of Spring,
With holy confidence the thoughtful man
Renews his vows to virtue,—vows that bind

To purest motives and most useful deeds.
Thus solemnly doth pass the vernal day,
In abstinence severe from worldly thoughts;
Lofty disdainings of all trivial joys
Or sorrows; meditations long and deep
On objects fit for the immortal love
Of souls immortal; weeping penitence
For duties (plain though highest duties be)
Despised or violated; humblest vows,
Though humble strong as death, henceforth to walk
Elate in innocence; and, holier still,
Warm gushings of his spirit unto God
For all his past existence, whether bright,
As the spring landscape sleeping in the sun,
Or dim and desolate like a wintry sea
Stormy and boding storms! Oh! such will be
Frequent and long his musings, till he feels
As all the stir subsides, like busy day
Soft-melting into eve's tranquillity,
How blest is peace when born within the soul.

And therefore do I sing these pensive hymns,
O Spring! to thee, though thou by some art called
Parent of mirth and rapture, worshipped best
With festive dances and a choral song.
No melancholy man am I, sweet Spring!
Who, filling all things with his own poor griefs,
Sees nought but sadness in the character
Of universal Nature, and who weaves
Most doleful ditties in the midst of joy.
Yet knowing something, dimly though it be,
And therefore still more awful, of that strange
And most tumultuous thing, the heart of man,
It chanceth oft, that mixed with Nature's smiles
My soul beholds a solemn quietness
That almost looks like grief, as if on earth
There were no perfect joy, and happiness
Still trembled on the brink of misery!

Yea! mournful thoughts like these even now arise,
While Spring, like Nature's smiling infancy,
Sports round me, and all images of peace
Seem native to this earth, nor other home
Desire or know. Yet doth a mystic chain
Link in our hearts foreboding fears of death

With every loveliest thing that seems to us
Most deeply fraught with life. Is there a child
More beauteous than its playmates, even more pure
Than they? while gazing on its face, we think
That one so fair most surely soon will die!
Such are the fears now beating at my heart.
Ere long, sweet Spring! amid forgotten things
Thou and thy smiles must sleep: thy little lambs
Dead, or their nature changed; thy hymning birds
Mute;—faded every flower so beautiful;—
And all fair symptoms of incipient life
To fulness swollen, or sunk into decay!

Such are the melancholy dreams that filled
In the elder time the songs of tenderest bards,
Whene'er they named the Spring. Thence, doubts and fears
Of what might be the final doom of man;
Till all things spoke to their perplexèd souls
The language of despair; and, mournful sight!
Even hope lay prostrate upon beauty's grave!—
Vain fears of death! breathed forth in deathless lays!
O foolish bards, immortal in your works,
Yet trustless of your immortality!
Not now are they whom Nature calls her bards
Thus daunted by the image of decay.
They have their tears, and oft they shed them too,
By reason unreproached; but on the pale
Cold cheek of death, they see a spirit smile,
Bright and still brightening, even like thee, O Spring!
Stealing in beauty through the winter snow!—

Season beloved of Heaven! my hymn is closed!
And thou, sweet Lake! on whose retirèd banks
I have so long reposed, yet in the depth
Of meditation scarcely seen thy waves,
Farewell!—the voice of worship and of praise
Dies on my lips, yet shall my heart preserve
Inviolate the spirit whence it sprang!
Even as a harp, when some wild plaintive strain
Goes with the hand that touched it, still retains
The soul of music sleeping in its strings.

THE

VOICE OF DEPARTED FRIENDSHIP.

I HAD a Friend who died in early youth!
—And often in those melancholy dreams,
When my soul travels through the umbrage deep
That shades the silent world of memory,
Methinks I hear his voice! Sweet as the breath
Of balmy ground-flowers stealing from some spot
Of sunshine sacred, in a gloomy wood,
To everlasting spring.
In the churchyard
Where now he sleeps—the day before he died,
Silent we sat together on a grave;
Till gently laying his pale hand on mine,
Pale in the moonlight that was coldly sleeping
On heaving sod and marble monument,—
This was the music of his last farewell!
"Weep not my brother! though thou seest me led
By short and easy stages, day by day,
With motion almost imperceptible
Into the quiet grave. God's will be done.
Even when a boy, in doleful solitude
My soul oft sat within the shadow of death!
And when I looked along the laughing earth,
Up the blue heavens, and through the middle air
Joyfully ringing with the sky-lark's song,
I wept! and thought how sad for one so young
To bid farewell to so much happiness.
But Christ hath called me from this lower world
Delightful though it be—and when I gaze
On the green earth and all its happy hills,
'Tis with such feelings as a man beholds
A little Farm which he is doomed to leave
On an appointed day. Still more and more
He loves it as that mournful day draws near,
But hath prepared his heart—and is resigned."
—Then lifting up his radiant eyes to heaven,

He said with fervent voice—" O what were life
Even in the warm and summer-light of joy
Without those hopes, that like refreshing gales
At evening from the sea, come o'er the soul
Breathed from the ocean of eternity.
—And oh ! without them who could bear the storms
That fall in roaring blackness o'er the waters
Of agitated life ! Then hopes arise
All round our sinking souls, like those fair birds
O'er whose soft plumes the tempest hath no power,
Waving their snow-white wings amid the darkness,
And wiling us with gentle motion, on
To some calm island ! on whose silvery strand
Dropping at once, they fold their silent pinions,—
And as we touch the shores of paradise
In love and beauty walk around our feet ! "

LORD RONALD'S CHILD.

THREE days ago Lord Ronald's child
Was singing o'er the mountain-wild,
Among the sunny showers
That brought the rainbow to her sight,
And bathed her footsteps in the light
Of purple heather-flowers.
But chilly came the evening's breath—
The silent dew was cold with death—
She reached her home with pain ;
And from the bed where now she lies,
With snow-white face and closèd eyes,
She ne'er must rise again.

Still is she as a frame of stone,
That in its beauty lies alone,
With silence breathing from its face,
For ever in some holy place !
Chapel or aisle ! on marble laid—
With pale hands o'er its pale breast spread—
An image humble, meek, and low,
Of one forgotten long ago !

Soft feet are winding up the stair—
And lo ! a Vision passing fair !
All dressed in white—a mournful show—
A band of orphan children come,
With footsteps like the falling snow,
To bear to her eternal home
The gracious Lady who looked down
With smiles on their forlorn estate—
But Mercy up to heaven is gone,
And left the friendless to their fate.

They pluck the honeysuckle's bloom,
That through the window fills the room

With mournful odours—and the rose
That in its innocent beauty glows,
Leaning its dewy golden head
Towards the pale face of the dead,
Weeping like a thing forsaken
Unto eyes that will not waken.

All bathed in pity's gentle showers
They place these melancholy flowers
Upon the cold white breast!
And there they lie! profoundly calm!
Ere long to fill with fading balm
A place of deeper rest!

By that fair Band the bier is borne
Into the open light of morn,—
And, till the parting dirge be said,
Upon a spot of sunshine laid
Beneath a grove of trees!
Bowed and uncovered every head,
Bright-tressed youth, and hoary age—
Then suddenly before the dead
Lord Ronald's gathered vassalage
Fall down upon their knees!

Glen-Etive and its mountains lie
All silent as the depth profound
Of that unclouded sunbright sky—
Low heard the melancholy sound
Of waters murmuring by;—
Glides softly from the orphan-band
A weeping Child, and takes her stand
Close to the Lady's feet,
Then wildly sings a funeral hymn!
With overflowing eyes and dim
Fixed on the winding-sheet!

HYMN.

O beautiful the streams
That through our valleys run,
Singing and dancing in the gleams
Of summer's cloudless sun.

The sweetest of them all
From its fairy banks is gone;
And the music of the waterfall
Hath left the silent stone!

Up among the mountains
In soft and mossy cell,
By the silent springs and fountains
The happy wild-flowers dwell.

The queen-rose of the wilderness
Hath withered in the wind,
And the shepherds see no loveliness
In the blossoms left behind.

Birds cheer our lonely groves
With many a beauteous wing—
When happy in their harmless loves
How tenderly they sing.

O'er all the rest was heard
One wild and mournful strain,—
But hushed is the voice of that hymning bird,
She ne'er must sing again!

Bright through the yew-trees' gloom,
I saw a sleeping dove!
On the silence of her silvery plume,
The sunlight lay in love.

The grove seemed all her own
Round the beauty of that breast—
But the startled dove afar is flown!
Forsaken is her nest!

In yonder forest wide
A flock of wild-deer lies,
Beauty breathes o'er each tender side,
And shades their peaceful eyes!

The hunter in the night
Hath singled out the doe,
In whose light the mountain-flock lay bright,
Whose hue was like the snow!

A thousand stars shine forth,
With pure and dewy ray—
Till by night the mountains of our north
Seem gladdening in the day.

O empty all the heaven!
Though a thousand lights be there—
For clouds o'er the evening-star are driven,
And shorn her golden hair!

That melancholy music dies—
And all at once the kneeling crowd
Is stirred with groans, and sobs, and sighs—
As sudden blasts come rustling loud
Along the silent skies.
—Hush! hush! the dirge doth breathe again!
The youngest of the orphan train
Walks up unto the bier,
With rosy cheeks, and smiling eyes
As heaven's unclouded radiance clear;
And there like Hope to Sorrow's strain
With dewy voice replies:—

What though the stream be dead,
Its banks all still and dry!
It murmureth now o'er a lovelier bed
In the air-groves of the sky.

What though our prayers from death
The queen-rose might not save!
With brighter bloom and balmier breath
She springeth from the grave.

What though our bird of light
Lie mute with plumage dim!
In heaven I see her glancing bright—
I hear her angel hymn.

What though the dark tree smile
No more with our dove's calm sleep!
She folds her wing on a sunny isle
In heaven's untroubled deep.

True that our beauteous doe
  Hath left her still retreat—
But purer now in heavenly snow
  She lies at Jesus feet.

O star! untimely set!
  Why should we weep for thee!
Thy bright and dewy coronet
  Is rising o'er the sea!

THE ANGLER'S TENT.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Poem is the narrative of one day, the pleasantest of many pleasant ones, of a little Angling-excursion among the mountains of Westmoreland, Lancashire, and Cumberland. A tent, large panniers filled with its furniture, with provisions, &c., were loaded upon horses, and while the anglers, who separated every morning, pursued each his own sport up the torrents, were carried over the mountains to the appointed place by some lake or stream, where they were to meet again in the evening.

In this manner they visited all the wildest and most secluded scenes of the country. On the first Sunday they passed among the hills, their tent was pitched on the banks of Wast-Water, at the head of that wild and solitary lake, which they had reached by the mountain-path that passes Barn-Moor Tarn from Eskdale. Towards evening, the inhabitants of the valley, not exceeding half-a-dozen families, with some too from the neighbouring glens, drawn by the unusual appearance, came to visit the strangers in their tent. Without, the evening was calm and beautiful; within, were the gaiety and kindness of simple mirth. At a late hour, their guests departed under a most refulgent moon that lighted them up the surrounding mountains, on which they turned to hail with long-continued shouts and songs the blazing of a huge fire, that was hastily kindled at the door of the tent to bid them a distant farewell.

The images and feelings of these few happy days, and, above all, of that delightful evening, the author wished to preserve in poetry. What he has written, while it serves to himself and his friends as a record of past happiness, may, he hopes, without impropriety be offered to the public, since, if at all faithful to its subject, it will have some interest to those who delight in the wilder scenes of Nature, and who have studied with respect and love the character of their simple inhabitants.

THE hush of bliss was on the sunny hills,
The clouds were sleeping on the silent sky,
We travelled in the midst of melody
Warbled around us from the mountain-rills.
The voice was like the glad voice of a friend
Murmuring a welcome to his happy home;
We felt its kindness with our spirits blend,
And said, "This day no farther will we roam!"

The coldest heart that ever looked on heaven,
Had surely felt the beauty of that day,
And, as he paused, a gentle blessing given
To the sweet scene that tempted him to stay.
But we, who travelled through that region bright,
Were joyful pilgrims under Nature's care,
From youth had loved the dreams of pure delight,
Descending on us through the lonely air,
When Heaven is clothed with smiles, and Earth as Heaven is fair!

Seven lovely days had like a happy dream
Died in our spirits silently away,
Since Grassmere, waking to the morning ray,
Met our last lingering look with farewell gleam.
I may not tell what joy our being filled
Wandering like shadows over plain and steep,
What beauteous visions lonely souls can build
When 'mid the mountain solitude they sleep.
I may not tell how the deep power of sound
Can back to life long-faded dreams recall,
When lying 'mid the noise that lives around
Through the hushed spirit flows a waterfall.
To thee, my WORDSWORTH!* whose inspirèd song
Comes forth in pomp from Nature's inner shrine,
To thee by birthright such high themes belong,
The unseen grandeur of the earth is thine!
One lowlier simple strain of human love be mine.

How leapt our hearts, when from an airy height,
On which we paused for a sweet fountain's sake,
With green fields fading in a peaceful lake,
A deep sunk vale burst sudden on our sight!
We felt as if at home; a magic sound,
As from a spirit whom we must obey,
Bade us descend into the vale profound,
And in its silence pass the Sabbath-day.
The placid lake that rested far below,
Softly embosoming another sky,
Still as we gazed assumed a lovelier glow,
And seemed to send us looks of amity.
Our hearts were open to the gracious love
Of Nature, smiling like a happy bride;
So following the still impulse from above,

* Mr Wordsworth accompanied the author on this excursion.

Down the green slope we wind with airy glide,
And pitch our snowy tent on that fair water's side.

Ah me! even now I see before me stand,
Among the verdant holly-boughs half-hid,
The little radiant airy Pyramid,
Like some wild dwelling built in Fairy-land.
As silently as gathering cloud it rose,
And seems a cloud descended on the earth,
Disturbing not the Sabbath-day's repose,
Yet gently stirring at the quiet birth
Of every short-lived breeze: the sunbeams greet
The beauteous stranger in the lonely bay;
Close to its shading tree two streamlets meet,
With gentle glide, as weary of their play.
And in the liquid lustre of the lake
Its image sleeps, reflected far below;
Such image as the clouds of summer make,
Clear seen amid the waveless water's glow,
As slumbering infant still, and pure as April snow.

Wild though the dwelling seem, thus rising fair,
A sudden stranger 'mid the sylvan scene,
One spot of radiance on surrounding green,
Human it is—and human souls are there!
Look through that opening in the canvass wall,
Through which by fits the scarce-felt breezes play,
—Upon three happy souls thine eyes will fall,
The summer lambs are not more blest than they.
On the green turf all motionless they lie,
In dreams romantic as the dreams of sleep,
The filmy air slow-glimmering on their eye,
And in their ear the murmur of the deep.
Or haply now by some wild-winding brook,
Deep, silent pool, or waters rushing loud,
In thought they visit many a fairy nook
That rising mists in rainbow colours shroud,
And ply the Angler's sport involved in mountain cloud!

Yes! dear to us that solitary trade,
'Mid vernal peace in peacefulness pursued,
Through rocky glen, wild moor, and hanging wood,
White-flowering meadow, and romantic glade!
The sweetest visions of our boyish years
Come to our spirits with a murmuring tone

Of running waters,—and one stream appears,
Remembered all, tree, willow, bank, and stone!
How glad were we, when after sunny showers
Its voice came to us issuing from the school!
How fled the vacant, solitary hours,
By dancing rivulet, or silent pool!
And still our souls retain in manhood's prime
The love of joys our childish years that blest;
So now encircled by these hills sublime,
We Anglers, wandering with a tranquil breast,
Build in this happy vale a fairy bower of rest!

Within that bower are strewn in careless guise,
Idle one day, the angler's simple gear;
Lines that, as fine as floating gossamer,
Dropt softly on the stream the silken flies;
The limber rod that shook its trembling length,
Almost as airy as the line it threw,
Yet often bending in an arch of strength
When the tired salmon rose at last to view,
Now lightly leans across the rushy bed,
On which at night we dream of sports by day;
And, empty now, beside it close is laid
The goodly pannier framed of osiers grey;
And, maple bowl in which we wont to bring
The limpid water from the morning wave,
Or from some mossy and sequestered spring
To which dark rocks a grateful coolness gave,
Such as might Hermit use in solitary cave!

And ne'er did Hermit, with a purer breast,
Amid the depths of sylvan silence pray,
Than prayed we friends on that mild quiet day,
By God and man beloved, the day of rest!
All passions in our souls were lulled to sleep,
Ev'n by the power of Nature's holy bliss;
While Innocence her watch in peace did keep
Over the spirit's thoughtful happiness!
We viewed the green earth with a loving look,
Like us rejoicing in the gracious sky;
A voice came to us from the running brook
That seemed to breathe a grateful melody.
Then all things seemed imbued with life and sense,
And as from dreams with kindling smiles to wake,
Happy, in beauty and in innocence;

While, pleased our inward quiet to partake,
Lay hushed, as in a trance, the scarcely-breathing lake.

Yet think not, in this wild and fairy spot,
This mingled happiness of earth and heaven,
Which to our hearts this Sabbath-day was given,
Think not that far-off friends were quite forgot.
Helm-crag arose before our half-closed eyes
With colours brighter than the brightening dove;
Beneath that guardian mount a cottage * lies
Encircled by the halo breathed from Love!
And sweet that dwelling † rests upon the brow
(Beneath its sycamore) of Orest-hill,
As if it smiled on Windermere below,
Her green recesses and her islands still!
Thus, gently-blended many a human thought
With those that peace and solitude supplied,
Till in our hearts the moving kindness wrought
With gradual influence, like a flowing tide,
And for the lovely sound of human voice we sighed.

And hark! a laugh, with voices blended, stole
Across the water, echoing from the shore!
And during pauses short, the beating oar
Brings the glad music closer to the soul.
We leave our tent; and lo! a lovely sight
Glides like a living creature through the air,
For air the water seems thus passing bright,
A living creature beautiful and fair!
Nearer it glides; and now the radiant glow
That on its radiant shadow seems to float,
Turns to a virgin band, a glorious show,
Rowing with happy smiles a little boat.
Towards the tent their lingering course they steer,
And cheerful now upon the shore they stand,
In maiden bashfulness, yet free from fear,
And by our side, gay-moving hand in hand,
Into our Tent they go, a beauteous sister-band!

Scarce from our hearts had gone the sweet surprise,
Which this glad troop of rural maids awoke;

* At that time the residence of Mr Wordsworth's family.
† The author's cottage on the banks of Windermere.

Scarce had a more familiar kindness broke
From the mild lustre of their smiling eyes,
Ere the Tent seemed encircled by the sound
Of many voices; in an instant stood
Men, women, children, all the circle round,
And with a friendly joy the strangers viewed.
Strange was it to behold this gladsome crowd
Our late so solitary dwelling fill;
And strange to hear their greetings mingling loud
Where all before was undisturbed and still.
Yet was the stir delightful to our ear,
And moved to happiness our inmost blood,
The sudden change, the unexpected cheer,
Breaking like sunshine on a pensive mood,
This breath and voice of life in seeming solitude!

Hard task it was, in our small tent to find
Seats for our quickly-gathered company;
But in them all was such a mirthful glee,
I ween they soon were seated to their mind!
Some viewing with a hesitating look
The panniers that contained our travelling fare,
On them at last their humble station took,
Pleased at the thought, and with a smiling air.
Some on our low-framed beds then chose their seat,
Each maid the youth that loved her best beside,
While many a gentle look, and whisper sweet,
Brought to the stripling's face a gladsome pride.
The playful children on the velvet green,
Soon as the first-felt bashfulness was fled,
Smiled to each other at the wondrous scene,
And whispered words they to each other said,
And raised in sportive fit the shining, golden head!

Then did we learn that this our stranger tent,
Seen by the lake-side gleaming like a sail,
Had quickly spread o'er mountain and o'er vale
A gentle shock of pleased astonishment.
The lonely dwellers by the lofty rills,
Gazed in surprise upon th' unwonted sight,
The wandering shepherds saw it from the hills,
And quick descended from their airy height.
Soon as the voice of simple song and prayer
Ceased in the little chapel of the dell,

The congregation did in peace repair
To the lake-side, to view our wondrous cell.
While leaving, for one noon, both young and old,
Their clustered hamlets in this deep recess,
All join the throng, in conscious goodwill bold,
Elate and smiling in their Sabbath-dress,
A mingled various group of homely happiness!

And thus our tent a joyous scene became,
Where loving hearts from distant vales did most
As at some rural festival, and greet
Each other with glad voice and kindly name.
Here a pleased daughter to her father smiled,
With fresh affection in her softened eyes;
He in return looked back upon his child
With gentle start and tone of mild surprise:
And on his little grandchild, at her breast,
An old man's blessing and a kiss bestowed,
Or to his cheek the lisping baby prest,
Light'ning the mother of her darling load;
While comely matrons, all sedately ranged
Close to their husbands' or their children's side,
A neighbour's friendly greeting interchanged,
And each her own with frequent glances eyed,
And raised her head in all a mother's harmless pride.

Happy were we among such happy hearts!
And to inspire with kindliness and love
Our simple guests, ambitiously we strove,
With novel converse and endearing arts.
We talked to them, and much they loved to hear,
Of those sweet vales from which we late had come;
For though these vales are to each other near,
Seldom do dalesman leave their own dear home:
Then would we speak of many a wondrous sight
Seen in great cities,—temple, tower, and spire,
And winding streets at nightfall blazing bright
With many a starlike lamp of glimmering fire.
The grey-haired men with deep attention heard,
Viewing the speaker with a solemn face,
While round our feet the playful children stirred,
And near their parents took their silent place,
Listening with looks where wonder breathed a glowing grace.

And much they gazed with never-tired delight
On varnished rod, with joints that shone like gold,
And silken line on glittering reel enrolled,
To infant anglers a most wondrous sight!
Scarce could their chiding parents then control
Their little hearts in harmless malice gay,
But still one, bolder than his fellows, stole
To touch the tempting treasures where they lay.
What rapture glistened in their eager eyes,
When, with kind voice, we bade these children take
A precious store of well-dissembled flies,
To use with caution for the strangers' sake!
The unlooked-for gift we graciously bestow
With sudden joy the leaping heart o'erpowers;
They grasp the lines, while all their faces glow
Bright as spring-blossoms after sunny showers,
And wear them in their hats like wreaths of valley-flowers!

Nor could they check their joyance and surprise,
When the clear crystal and the silver bowl
Gleamed with a novel beauty on their soul,
And the wine mantled with its rosy dyes.
For all our pomp we showed with mickle glee,
And choicest viands, fitly to regale,
On such a day of rare festivity,
Our guests thus wondering at their native vale.
And oft we pledged them, nor could they decline
The social cup we did our best to press,
But mingled wishes with the joyful wine,
Warm wishes for our health and happiness.
And all the while, a low, delightful sound
Of voice soft-answering voice, with music filled
Our fairy palace's enchanted ground,
Such tones as seem from blooming tree distilled,
Where unseen bees repair their waxen cells to build.

Lost as we were in that most blessed mood
Which Nature's sons alone can deeply prove,
We lavished with free heart our kindest love
On all who breathed,—one common brotherhood.
Three faithful servants, men of low degree,
Were with us, as we roamed the wilds among,
And well it pleased their simple hearts to see
Their masters mingling with the rural throng.

Oft to our guests they sought to speak aside,
And, in the genial flow of gladness, told
That we were free from haughtiness or pride,
Though scholars all, and rich in lands and gold.
We smiled to hear our praise thus rudely sung,
(Well might such praise our modesty offend)
Yet, we all strove, at once with eye and tongue
To speak, as if invited by a friend,
And with our casual talk instruction's voice to blend.

Rumours of wars had reached this peaceful vale,
And of the Wicked King, whom guilt hath driven
On earth to wage a warfare against Heaven,
These sinless shepherds had heard many a tale.
Encircled as we were with smiles and joy,
In quietness to Quiet's dwelling brought,
To think of him whose bliss is to destroy,
At such a season was an awful thought!
We felt the eternal power of happiness
And virtue's power; we felt with holy awe
That in this world, in spite of chance distress,
Such is the Almighty Spirit's ruling law.
And joyfully did we these shepherds tell
To hear all rumours with a tranquil mind,
For, in the end, that all would yet be well,
Nor this bad Monarch leave one trace behind,
More than o'er yonder hills the idly-raving wind.

Then gravely smiled, in all the power of age,
A hoary-headed, venerable man,
Like the mild chieftain of a peaceful clan,
'Mid simple spirits looked on as a sage.
Much did he praise the holy faith we held,
Which God, he said, to cheer the soul had given,
For even the very angels that rebelled,
By sin performed the blessed work of Heaven.
The Wicked King, of whom we justly spake,
Was but an instrument in God's wise hand,
And though the kingdoms of the earth might quake,
Peace would revisit every ravaged land.
Even as the earthquake, in some former time,
Scattered yon rugged mountain far and wide,
Till years of winter's snow and summer's prime,
To naked cliffs fresh verdure have supplied,
—Now troops of playful lambs are bounding on its side.

Pleased were the simple group to hear the sire
Thus able to converse with men from far,
And much did they of vaguely-rumoured war,
That long had raged in distant lands, inquire.
Scarce could their hearts, at peace with all mankind,
Believe what bloody deeds on earth are done,
That man of woman born should be so blind
As walk in guilt beneath the blessed sun ;
And one, with thoughtful countenance, exprest
A fear lest on some dark disastrous day,
Across the sea might come that noisome pest,
And make fair England's happy vales his prey.
Short-lived that fear !—soon firmer thoughts arise :
Well could these dalesmen wield the patriot's sword,
And stretch the foe beneath the smiling skies ;
In innocence they trust, and in the Lord,
Whom they, that very morn, in gladness had adored !

But soon such thoughts to lighter speech give way ;
We in our turn a willing ear did lend
To tale of sports, that made them blithely spend
The winter-evening and the summer-day.
Smiling they told us of the harmless glee
That bids the echoes of the mountains wake,
When at the stated festival they see
Their new-washed flocks come snow-white from the lake ;
And joyful dance at neighbouring village fair,
Where lads and lasses, in their best attire,
Go to enjoy that playful pastime rare,
And careful statesmen shepherds new to hire !
Or they would tell, how, at some neighbour's cot,
When nights are long, and winter on the earth,
All cares are in the dance and song forgot,
And round the fire quick flies the circling mirth,
When nuptial vows are pledged, or at an infant's birth !

Well did the roses blooming on their cheek,
And eyes of laughing light, that glistened fair
Beneath the artless ringlets of their hair,
Each maiden's health and purity bespeak.
Following the impulse of their simple will,
No thought had they to give or take offence ;
Glad were their bosoms, yet sedate and still,
And fearless in the strength of innocence.

Oft as, in accents mild, we strangers spoke
To these sweet maidens, an unconscious smile
Like sudden sunshine o'er their faces broke,
And with it struggling blushes mixed the while.
And oft as mirth and glee went laughing round,
Breathed in this maiden's ear some harmless jest
Would make her, for one moment, on the ground
Her eyes let fall, as wishing from the rest
To hide the sudden throb that beat within her breast.

Oh! not in vain have purest poets told,
In elegies and hymns that ne'er shall die,
How, in the fields of famous Arcady,
Lived simple shepherds in the age of gold!
They fabled not, in peopling rural shades
With all most beautiful in heart and frame;
Where without guile swains wooed their happy maids,
And love was friendship with a gentler name.
Such songs in truth and nature had their birth,
Their source was lofty and their aim was pure,
And still, in many a favoured spot of earth,
The virtues that awoke their voice endure!
Bear witness thou, O wild and beauteous dell,
To whom my gladdened heart devotes this strain!
—Oh! long may all who in thy bosom dwell
Nature's primeval innocence retain,
Nor e'er may lawless foot thy sanctity profane!

Sweet Maids! my wandering heart returns to you;
And well the blush of joy, the courteous air,
Words unrestrained, and open looks declare
That fancy's day-dreams have not been untrue.
It was indeed a beauteous thing, to see
The virgin, while her bashful visage smiled,
As if she were a mother on her knee
Take up, with many a kiss, the asking child.
And well, I ween, she played the mother's part;
For as she bended o'er the infant fair,
A mystic joy seemed stirring at her heart,
A yearning fondness, and a silent prayer.
Nor did such gentle maiden long refuse
To cheer our spirits with some favourite strain,
Some simple ballad, framed by rustic muse,
Of one who died for love, or, led by gain,
Sailed in a mighty ship to lands beyond the main.

And must we close this scene of merriment?
—Lo! in the lake soft burns the star of eve,
And the night-hawk hath warned our guests to leave,
Ere darker shades descend, our happy tent.
The Moon's bright edge is seen above the hill;
She comes to light them on their homeward way;
And every heart, I ween, now lies as still
As on yon fleecy cloud her new-born ray.
Kindly by young and old our hands are pressed,
And kindly we the gentle touch return;
Each face declares that deep in every breast
Peace, virtue, friendship, and affection burn.
At last beneath the silent air we part,
And promise make that shall not be in vain,
A promise asked and given warm from the heart,
That we will visit all, on hill and plain,
If e'er it be our lot to see this land again.

Backward they gazed, as slowly they withdrew,
With step reluctant, from the water-side;
And oft, with waving hand, at distance tried
Through the dim light to send a last adieu!
One lovely group still lingered on the green,
The first to come, the last to go away;
While steeped in stillness of the moonlight scene,
Moored to a rock their little pinnace lay.
These laughing damsels climb its humble side,
Like fairy elves that love the starry sea;
Nor e'er did billows with more graceful glide
'Mid the wild main enjoy their liberty.
Their faces brightening in triumphant hue,
Close to each maid their joyful lovers stand;
One gives the signal,—all the jovial crew
Let go, with tender press, the yielding hand;
—Down drop the oars at once,—away they push from land.

The boat hath left the silent bank, the tone
Of the retiring oar escapes the mind;
Like mariners some ship hath left behind,
We feel, thus standing speechless and alone.
One moment lives that melancholy trance—
The mountains ring: Oh! what a joy is there!
As hurries o'er their heights, in circling dance,
Cave-loving Echo, Daughter of the Air.

Is it some spirit of night that wakes the shout,
As o'er the cliffs, with headlong speed, she ranges ?
Is it, on plain and steep, some fairy rout
Answering each other in tumultuous changes ?
There seems amid the hills a playful war ;
Trumpet and clarion join the mystic noise ;
Now growing on the ear, now dying far !
Great Gabel from his summit sends a voice,
And the remotest depths of Ennerdale rejoice !

Oh ! well I know what means this din of mirth !
No spirits are they, who, trooping through the sky,
In chorus swell that mountain-melody ;
It comes from mortal children of the earth !
These are the voices that so late did cheer
Our tent with laughter ; from the hills they come
With friendly sound unto our listening ear,
A jocund farewell to our glimmering home.
Loth are our guests, though they have lingered long,
That our sweet tent at last should leave their sight ;
So with one voice they sing a parting song,
Ere they descend behind the clouds of night.
Nor are we mute ; an answering shout we wake,
At each short pause of the long, lengthening sound,
Till all is silent as the silent Lake,
And every noise above, below, around,
Seems in the brooding night-sky's depth of slumber drowned !

Soon from that calm our spirits start again
With blither vigour ; nought around we see
Save lively images of mirth and glee,
And playful fancies hurry through our brain.
Shine not, sweet Moon ! with such a haughty light ;
Ye stars ! behind your veil of clouds retire ;
For we shall kindle on the earth, this night,
To drown your feeble rays, a joyous fire.
Bring the leaves withering in the holly-shade,
The oaken branches sapless now and hoar.
The fern no longer green, and whins that fade
'Mid the thin sand that strews the rocky shore.
Heap them above that new-awakened spark :
Soon shall a pyramid of flame arise ;
Now the first rustling of the vapour, hark !
The kindling spirit from its prison flies,
And in an instant mounts in glory to the skies !

Far gleams the Lake, as in the light of day,
Or when, from mountain-top, the setting sun,
Ere yet his earth-delighting course is run,
Sheds on the slumbering wave a purple ray.
A bright'ning verdure runs o'er every field,
As if by potent necromancer shed,
And a dark wood is suddenly revealed,
A glory resting on its ancient head.
And oh! what radiant beauty doth invest
Our tent that seems to feel a conscious pride,
Whiter by far than any cygnet's breast,
Or cygnet's shadow floating with the tide.
A warmer flush unto the moonlight cold,
Winning its lovely way, is softly given,
A silvery radiance tinged with vivid gold;
While thousand mimic stars are gaily driven
Through the bright glistening air, scarce known from those
in Heaven.

Amid the flame our lurid figures stand,
Or, through the shrouding vapour dimly viewed,
To fancy seem, in that strange solitude,
Like the wild brethren of some lawless band.
One, snatching from the heap a blazing bough,
Would, like lone maniac, from the rest retire,
And, as he waved it, mutter deep a vow,
His head encircled with a wreath of fire.
Others, with rushing haste, and eager voice,
Would drag new victims to the insatiate power,
That like a savage idol did rejoice
Whate'er his suppliants offered to devour.
And aye strange murmurs o'er the mountains rolled,
As if from sprite immured in cavern lone,
While higher rose pale Luna to behold
Our mystic orgies, where no light had shone,
For many and many a year of silence—but her own.

Oh! gracious Goddess! not in vain did shine
Thy spirit o'er the heavens; with reverent eye
We hailed thee floating through the happy sky;
No smiles to us are half so dear as thine!
Silent we stood beside our dying flame,
In pensive sadness, born of wild delight,
And gazing heavenward, many a gentle name
Bestowed on her who beautifies the night.

Then, with one heart, like men who inly mourned,
Slowly we paced towards our fairy cell,
And e'er we entered, for one moment turned,
And bade the silent majesty farewell!
Our rushy beds invite us to repose;
And while our spirits breathe a grateful prayer,
In balmy slumbers soon our eyelids close,
While, in our dreams, the Moon, serenely fair,
Still bathes in light divine the visionary air!

Methinks, next night, I see her mount her throne,
Intent with loving smile once more to hail
The deep, deep peace of this her loneliest vale,
—But where hath now the magic dwelling flown?
Oh! it hath melted like a dream away,
A dream by far too beautiful for earth;
Or like a cloud that hath no certain stay,
But ever changing, like a different birth.
The aged holly trees more silently,
Now we are gone, stand on the silent ground;
I seem to hear the streamlet floating by
With a complaining, melancholy sound.
Hushed are the echoes in each mountain's breast,
No traces there of former mirth remain;
They all in friendly grandeur lie at rest
And silent, save where Nature's endless strain
From cataract and cave, delights her lonely reign.

Yet, though the strangers and their Tent have past
Away, like snow that leaves no mark behind,
Their image lives in many a guiltless mind,
And long within the shepherd's cot shall last.
Oft when, on winter night, the crowded seat
Is closely wheeled before the blazing fire,
Then will he love with grave voice to repeat
(He, the grey-headed venerable sire)
The conversation he with us did hold
On moral subjects, he had studied long;
And some will gibe the maid who was so bold
As sing to strangers readily a song.
Then they unto each other will recall
Each little incident of that strange night,
And give their kind opinion of us all:
God bless their faces smiling in the light
Of their own cottage-hearth! O, fair subduing sight!

Friends of my heart! who shared that purest joy,
And oft will read these lines with softened soul,
Go where we will, yet years of absence roll,
Nought shall our sacred amity destroy.
We walked together through the mountain-calm,
In open confidence, and perfect trust;
And pleasure, falling through our breasts like balm,
Told that the yearnings that we felt were just.
No slighting tone, no chilling look e'er marred
The happiness in which our thoughts reposed,
No words save those of gentleness were heard,
The eye spoke kindly when the lip was closed.
But chief, on that blest day that wakes my song,
Our hearts eternal truth in silence swore;
The holy oath is planted deep and strong
Within our spirits,—in their inmost core,—
And it shall blossom fair till life shall be no more!

Most hallowed day! scarce can my heart sustain
Your tender light by memory made more mild;
Tears could I shed even like unto a child,
And sighs within my spirit hush the strain.
Too many clouds have dimmed my youthful life,
These wakeful eyes too many vigils kept;
Mine hath it been to toss in mental strife,
When in the moonlight breathing Nature slept.
But I forget my cares, in bliss forget,
When, peaceful Valley! I remember thee;
I seem to breathe the air of joy, and yet
Thy brightening hues with moistened eyes I see.
So will it be, till life itself doth close,
Roam though I may o'er many a distant clime;
Happy, or pining in unnoticed woes,
Oft shall my soul recall that blessed time,
And in her depth adore the beauteous and sublime!

Time that my rural reed at last should cease
Its willing numbers; not in vain hath flowed
The strain that on my singing heart bestowed
The holy boon of undisturbèd peace.
O gentlest Lady! Sister of my friend,
This simple strain I consecrate to thee;
Haply its music with thy soul may blend,
Albeit well used to loftier minstrelsy.

Nor, may thy quiet spirit read the lay
With cold regard, thou wife and mother blest!
For he was with me on that Sabbath-day,
Whose heart lies buried in thy inmost breast.
Then go, my innocent and blameless tale,
In gladness go, and free from every fear,
To yon sweet dwelling above Grassmere vale,
And be to them I long have held so dear,
One of their fireside songs, still fresh from year to year!

APOLOGY FOR THE LITTLE NAVAL TEMPLE,

ON STORRS' POINT, WINANDERMERE.

Nay! Stranger! smile not at this little dome,
Albeit quaint, and with no nice regard
To highest rules of grace and symmetry,
Plaything of art, it venture thus to stand
'Mid the great forms of Nature. Doth it seem
A vain intruder in the quiet heart
Of this majestic Lake, that like an arm
Of Ocean, or some Indian river vast,
In beauty floats amid its guardian hills?
Haply it may: yet in this humble tower,
The mimicry of loftier edifice,
There lives a silent spirit, that confers
A lasting charter on its sportive wreath
Of battlements, amid the mountain-calm
To stand as proudly, as yon giant rock
That with his shadow dims the dazzling lake!

Then blame it not: for know 'twas planted here,
In mingled mood of seriousness and mirth,
By one * who meant to Nature's sanctity
No cold unmeaning outrage. He was one
Who often in adventurous youth had sailed
O'er the great waters, and he dearly loved
Their music wild; nor less the gallant souls
Whose home is on the Ocean:—so he framed
This jutting mole, that like a natural cape
Meets the soft-breaking waves, and on its point,
Bethinking him of some sea-structure huge,
Watch-tower or light-house, reared this mimic dome,
Seen up and down the lake, a monument
Sacred to images of former days.

See! in the playfulness of English zeal
Its low walls are emblazoned! there thou read'st

* The late Sir John Legard, Bart.

Howe, Duncan, Vincent, and that mightier name
Whom death has made immortal.—Not misplaced
On temple rising from an inland sea
Such venerable names, though ne'er was heard
The sound of cannon o'er these tranquil shores,
Save when it pealed to waken in her cave
The mountain echo: yet this chronicle,
Speaking of war amid the depths of peace,
Wastes not its meaning on the heedless air.
It hath its worshippers: it sends a voice,
A voice creating elevated thoughts,
Into the hearts of our bold peasantry
Following the plough along these fertile vales,
Or up among the misty solitude
Beside the wild sheep-fold. The fishermen,
Who on the clear wave ply their silent trade,
Oft passing lean upon their dripping oars,
And bless the heroes: Idling in the joy
Of summer sunshine, as in light canoe
The stranger glides among these lovely isles,
This little temple to his startled soul
Oft sends a gorgeous vision, gallant crews
In fierce joy cheering as they onwards bear
To break the line of battle, meteor-like
Long ensigns brightening on the towery mast,
And sails in awful silence o'er the main
Lowering like thunder-clouds!—

Then, stranger! give
A blessing on this temple, and admire
The gaudy pendant round the painted staff
Wreathed in still splendour, or in wanton folds,
Even like a serpent bright and beautiful,
Streaming its burnished glory on the air.
And whether silence sleep upon the stones
Of this small edifice, or from within
Steal the glad voice of laughter and of song,
Pass on with altered thoughts, and gently own
That Windermere, with all her radiant isles
Serenely floating on her azure breast,
Like stars in heaven, with kindest smiles may robe
This monument to heroes dedicate,
Nor Nature feel her holy reign profaned
By work of art, though framed in humblest guise,
When a high spirit prompts the builder's soul.

THE FAIRIES.

A DREAM-LIKE REMEMBRANCE OF A DREAM.

It chanced three merry Fairies met
On the bridge of a mountain rivulet,
Whose hanging arch through the misty spray,
Like a little Lunar Rainbow lay,
With turf and flowers a pathway meet,
For the twinkling of unearthly feet,
For bright were the flowers as their golden tresses,
And green the turf as their Elfin-dresses.
Aye the water o'er the Linn
Was mocking, with a gleesome din,
The small shrill laughter, as it broke
In peals from these night-wandering Folk:
While the stream danced on with a tinkling tune,
All happy to meet by a blink o' the moon.
Now laughing louder than before,
They strove to deaden that ceaseless roar;
And, when vanquished was the waterfall,
Loudly they shouted, one and all,
Like the chorus of a Madrigal,
Till the glen awoke from its midnight trance,
And o'er the hills in flight-like dance,
Was all the troop of echoes driven,
This moment on earth, and that in heaven.

From the silent heart of a hollow Yew,
The Owl sailed forth with a loud haloo;
And his large yellow eyes looked bright
With wonder, in the wan moonlight,
As hovering white, and still as snow,
He caught a glance of the things below,
All burning on the bridge like fire
In the sea-green glow of their wild attire.

"Haloo! Haloo! tu-whit! tu-whoo!"
Cried the gleesome Elves, and away they flew,
With mimic shriek, sob, cry, and howl,
In headlong chase of the frightened Owl.
With many a buffet they drove him onward,
Now hoisted him up, now pressed him downward;
They pulled at his horns, and with many a tweak,
Around and around they screwed his beak;
On his back they beat with a birch-spray flail,
And they tore the long feathers from his tail;
Then, like warriors mounted in their pride,
Behind his wings behold them ride!
And shouting, charge unto the war,
Each waving his soft plume-scymitar;
A war of laughter, not of tears,
The wild-wood's harmless Cuirassiers.

Through the depth of Ivy on the wall
(The sole remains of old Greystock Hall)
The Screamer is driven, half scared to death;
And the gamesome Fairies, all out of breath,
Their tiny robes in the air arranging,
And kisses in their flight exchanging;
Now slowly with the soft wind stealing
Right onwards, round about now wheeling,
Like leaves blown off in gusty weather,
To the rainbow-bridge all flock together;
And lo! on the green moss all alight,
Like a cluster of Goldfinches mingling bright.

What feats the Fairy Creatures played!
Now seeming of the height afraid,
And, folding the moss in fast embraces,
They peeped o'er the bridge with their lovely faces.
Now hanging like the fearless flowers
By their tiny arms in the Cataract-showers,
Swung back and forward with delight,
Like Pearls in the spray-shower burning bright!
Then they dropt at once into the Pool—
A moment gone! then beautiful
Ascending on slow-hovering wing,
As if with darkness dallying,
They rose again, through the smiling air,
To their couch of moss and flowerets fair,
And rooted lay in silence there.

Down into the gulf profound
Slid the stream without a sound!
A charm had hushed the thundering shocks,
And stillness steeped the blackened rocks.
'Twas fit, where these fair things were lying,
No sound, save of some Zephyr sighing,
Should stir the gentle Solitude!
The mountain's night-voice was subdued
To far-off music faint and dim,
From Nature's heart a holy hymn!
Nor was that Universal Strain
Through Fairy-bosoms breathed in vain;
Entranced in joy the Creatures lay,
Listening the music far away,
Till One the deepening silence broke,
And thus in song-like murmurs spoke.

MOUNTAIN-FAIRY.

"Soon as the lingering Sun was gone,
I sailed away from my sparry throne,
Mine own cool, silent, glimmering dwelling,
Below the roots of the huge Helvellyn.
As onwards like a thought I flew,
From my wings fast fell the pearly dew,
Sweet tiny orbs of lucid ray
Rising and setting on my way,
As if I had been some Planet fair,
That ruled its own bright atmosphere.
'O beauteous sight!' the Shepherd cried,
To the Shepherd slumbering at his side,—
'Look where the Mountain-Fairy flies!'
But ere he had opened his heavy eyes,
I had flown o'er Grassmere's moonlight flood,
And the rustling swing of old Rydal-Wood,
And sunk down 'mid the heather-bells
On the shady side of sweet Furness-Fells.
'Twas but one soft wave o' my wing!
A start, and an end to my journeying.
One moment's rest in a spot so dear,—
For the Moonlight was sleeping on Windermere,
And I saw in that long pure streak of light
The joy and the sadness of the night,
And mine eyes, in sooth, began to fill,
So beautiful that Lake—so still—

So motionless its gentle breast—
Save where just rocking in their rest,
A crowd of water-lilies lay
Like stars amid the milky way.

But what had I with the Lake to do ?
So off to the misty hills I flew,
And in dark ravines, and creviced rocks,
With my finger I counted my thousand flocks,
And each little Lamb by name I blest,
As snow-white they lay in their innocent rest.
When I saw some weak cold tottering Lamb
Recline 'gainst the side of its pitiful Dam,
Who seemed to have some wildering fear
Of Death, as of a Foe that was near,
I shone like a sunbeam soft and warm
Till the fleece lay smooth on its strengthened form,
And the happy Creatures lay down together
Like waves on the sea in gentle weather,
And in contentment calm and deep
Sank faintly-bleating into sleep.
In the soft moonlight glow I knew
Where the herbs that hold the poison grew ;
And at the touch of my feathery foot
They withered at once both stalk and root,
But I shook not the gracious tears of night
From the plants most dear to the Shepherd's sight,
And with mellower lustre bade them spring
In the yellow round of the Fairy's ring,
Till, methought, the hill-side smiled afar
With the face of many a verdant Star.
I marked the Fox at the mouth of his den,
And raised the shadows of Hunter-men,
And I bade aërial beagles rave,
And the horn twang through the Felon's cave,
Then buried him with Famine in his grave.

The Raven sat upon Langdale-Peak
With crusted blood on his ebon-beak,
And I dashed him headlong from the steep,
While the murderer croaked in his sullen sleep.
Away I sailed by the Eagle's nest
And the Eaglets couched warm beneath her breast,
But the Shepherd shall miss her cry at morn
For her eyes are dim and her plumage torn,

And I left in their Eyrie the Imps accurst
To die in their hunger, and cold, and thirst.
All, all is well with my lovely Flocks!
And so I dropt suddenly down the rocks,
From Loughrig-top, like a falling Star,
Seen doubtless through the mists afar
By a hundred Shepherds on the Hill
Wandering among the Moonlight still,
And with folded wings and feet earth-bound
I felt myself standing o'er the sound
Of this Waterfall, and with joy espied
A Sister-Elf at either side!
My Tale is told—nor strange nor new—
Now, sweet Lady Bright-Eyes! what say you?"

As some wild Night-Flower through the dew
Looks to the Moon with freshened hue,
When a wandering breath of air
Hath lifted up its yellow hair,
And its own little glade grows bright
At the soft revealment of its light,
Upsprung, so sudden and so sweet,
The COTTAGE-FAIRY to her feet;
And, looking round her with a smile,
Silent the Creature paused awhile,
Uncertain what glad thoughts should burst
In music from her spirit first,
Till, like a breath breathed clear from Heaven,
To her at once a voice was given,
And through the tune the words arose
As through the fragrant dew the leaflets of the Rose.

COTTAGE-FAIRY.

"Sisters! I have seen this night
A hundred Cottage-Fires burn bright,
And a thousand happy faces shining
In the bursting blaze, and the gleam declining.
I care not I for the stars above,
The lights on earth are the lights I love:
Let Venus bless the Evening-air,
Uprise at morn Prince Lucifer,
But those little tiny stars be mine
That through the softened copse-wood shine,

With beauty crown the pastoral hill,
And glimmer o'er the sylvan rill,
Where stands the Peasant's ivied nest,
And the huge mill-wheel is at rest.
From out the honeysuckle's bloom
I peeped into that laughing room,
Then, like a hail-drop, on the pane
Pattering, I stilled the din again,
While every startled eye looked up;
And, half-raised to her lips the cup,
The rosy Maiden's look met mine!
But I veiled mine eyes with the silken twine
Of the small wild-roses clustering thickly;
Then to her seat returning quickly,
She 'gan to talk with bashful glee
Of Fairies 'neath the greenwood Tree
Dancing by moonlight, and she blest
Gently our silent Land of rest.
The Infants playing on the floor,
At these wild words their sports gave o'er,
And asked where lived the Cottage-Fairy;
The maid replied, 'She loves to tarry
Ofttimes beside our very hearth,
And joins in little children's mirth
When they are gladly innocent;
And sometimes beneath the leafy Tent,
That murmurs round our Cottage-door,
Our overshadowing Sycamore,
We see her dancing in a ring,
And hear the blessed Creature sing—
A Creature full of gentleness,
Rejoicing in our happiness.'
Then plucked I a wreath with many a gem
Burning—a flowery Diadem;
And through the wicket with a glide
I slipped, and sat me down beside
The youngest of those Infants fair,
And wreathed the blossoms round her hair.
'Who placed these flowers on William's head?'
His little wondering Sister said,
'A wreath not half so bright and gay
Crowned me, upon the morn of May,
Queen of that sunny Holiday.'
The tiny Monarch laughed aloud
With pride among the loving crowd,

And, with my shrillest voice, I lent
A chorus to their merriment;
Then with such murmur as a Bee
Makes, from a flower-cup suddenly
Borne off into the silent sky,
I skimmed away, and with delight
Sailed down the calm stream of the night,
Till gently, as a flake of Snow,
Once more I dropt on earth below,
And girdled as with a rainbow zone,
The Cot beloved I call mine own.

"Sweet Cot! that on the mountain-side
Looks to the stars of Heaven with pride,
And then flings far its smiling cheer
O'er the radiant Isles of Windermere,—
Blest! ever blest! thy sheltered roof!
Pain, grief, and trouble, stand aloof
From the shadow of thy green Palm-Tree!
Let nought from Heaven e'er visit Thee,
But dews, and rays, and sounds of mirth;
And ever may this happy Earth
Look happiest round thy small domain!
Thee were I ne'er to see again,
Methinks that agony and strife
Would fall even on a Fairy's life,
And nought should ever bless mine eyes
Save the dream of that vanished Paradise.
—The hushed bee-hives were still as death—
And the sleeping Doves held fast their breath,
Nestling together on the thatch;
With my wing-tip I raised the latch,
And there that lovely Lady shone,
In silence sitting all alone,
Beside the cradle of her Child!
And ever as she gazed, she smiled
On his calm forehead white as snow;
I rocked the cradle to and fro,
As on the broom a Linnet's nest
Swings to the mild wind from the west;
And oft his little hands and breast,
With warm and dewy lips I kissed.
'Sweet Fairy!' the glad Mother said,
And down she knelt as if she prayed—

While glad was I to hear our name
Bestowed on such a beauteous frame,
And with my wings I hid mine eyes,
Till I saw the weeping kneeler rise
From her prayer in holy ecstasies !"

The COTTAGE-FAIRY ceased ; and Night,
That seemed to feel a calm delight
In the breath of that sweet-warbling tongue,
Was sad at closing of the song,
And all her starry eyne looked dull,
Of late so brightly beautiful ;
Till on the Fox-glove's topmost cup
The FAIRY OF THE LAKE leapt up,
And with that gorgeous column swinging,
By fits a low wild prelude singing,
And gracefully on tip-toe standing,
With outstretched arm, as if commanding,
The beauty of the Night again
Revived beneath her heavenly strain.—
Low, sad, and wild, were the tones I heard,
Like the opening song of the hidden Bird,
E'er music steeps the Italian vales
From the heart of a thousand Nightingales ;
But words were none ; the balmy air
Grew vocal round that Elfin fair,
And, like her fragrant breath, the song
Dropped dewily from that sweet tongue,
But 'twas a language of her own,
To grosser human sense unknown ;
And while in blissful reverie
My soul lived on that melody,
In a moment all as death was still :
Then, like an echo in a Hill
Far off one melancholy strain !
Too heavenly pure to rise again,—
And all alone the dreamer stood
Beside the disenchanted flood,
That rolled the rocky banks along
With its own dull, slow, mortal song.
—What wafted off the Fairies ? hush !
The storm comes down the glen—crush—crush—
And as the blackening rain-cloud broke,
The Pine Tree groans to the groaning Oak !

Thunder is in the waving wood—
And from Rydal-mere's white-flashing flood
There comes through the mist an angry roar,
Loud as from the great sea-shore.
Well, I ween, the Fairies knew
The clouds that the sudden tempest brew,
And had heard far-off the raging rills,
As they leapt down from a hundred hills,—
And the ghostlike moan that wails and raves
From the toppling crags and the sable caves,—
Ere the night-storm in his wrath doth come,
And bids each meaner sound be dumb—
So they sailed away to the land of rest,
Each to the spot that it loved the best,
And left our noisy world!

THE HERMITAGE.

Stranger ! this lonely glen in ancient times
Was named the glen of blood ; nor Christian feet
By night or day, from these o'erarching cliffs
That haply now have to thy joyful shouts
Returned a mellow music, ever brought
One trembling sound to break the depth of silence.
The village maiden, in this little stream,
Though then, as now, most clearly beautiful,
Ne'er steeped her simple garments, while she sang
Some native air of sadness or of mirth.
In these cold, shady pools, the fearless trout
Ne'er saw the shadow, but of sailing cloud,
Or kite that wheeling eyed the far-off lamb ;
And on yon hazel bowers the ripened fruit
Hung clustering, moved but by the frequent swing
Of playful squirrel,—for no schoolboy here
With crook and angle light on holiday
Came nutting, or to snare the sportive fry.
Even bolder spirits shunned the glen of blood !
These rocks, the abode of echo, never mocked
In sportive din the huntsman's bugle-horn ;
And as the shepherd from the mountain-fold
Homewards returned beneath the silent Moon,
A low unconscious prayer would agitate
His breathless heart, for here in unblest grave
Lay one for whom ne'er tolled the passing bell !

And thus was Nature by the impious guilt
Of one who scorned her gracious solitude,
Defrauded of her worshippers ; though pure
This glen, as consecrated house of God,
Fit haunt of heaven-aspiring piety,
Or in whose dripping cells the poet's ear
Might list unearthly music, this sweet glen

With all its tender tints and pensive sounds,
Its balmy fragrance and romantic forms,
Lay lonely and unvisited, yea worse,
Peopled with fancied demons, and the brood
At enmity with man.

So was it once :
But now far other creed hath sanctified
This dim seclusion, and all human hearts
Unto its spirit deeply reconciled.
'Tis said, and I in truth believe the tale,
That many years ago an aged man,
Of a divine aspect and stately form,
Came to this glen, and took up his abode
In one of those wild caves so numerous
Among the hanging cliffs, though hid from view
By trailing ivy, or thick holly-bush,
Through the whole year so deeply, brightly green.
With evil eye the simple villagers
First looked on him, and scarcely dared to tell
Each other, what dim fears were in their souls.
But there is something in the voice and eye
Of beautiful old age, with angel power
That charms away suspicion, and compels
The unwilling soul to reverence and love.
So was it with this mystical old man !
When first he came into the glen, the spring
Had just begun to tinge the sullen rocks
With transient smiles, and ere the leafy bowers
Of summer rustled, many a visitant
Had sat within his hospitable cave,
From his maple bowl the unpolluted spring
Drunk fearless, and with him partook the bread
That his pale lips most reverently had blessed
With words becoming such a holy man !

Oft was he seen surrounded by a group
Of happy children, unto whom he spake
With more than a paternal tenderness
And they who once had gazed with trembling fear
On the wild dweller in the unholy glen,
At last with airy trip and gladsome song
Would seek him there, and listen on his knee
To mournful ditties, and most touching tales !

One only book was in this hermit's cell,
The Book of Life ; and when from it he read
With solemn voice devoutly musical,
His thoughtful eye still brightening as the words,
The words of Jesus, in that peaceful cave
Sounded more holily,—and his grey hair,
Betokening that ere long in Jesus' breast
Would be his blessed sleep,—on his calm brows
Spread quietly, like thin and snowy clouds
On the hushed evening sky :—While thus he sate,
Even like the Apostle whom our Saviour loved,
In his old age, in Patmos' lonely isle
Musing on Him that he had served in youth,—
Oh ! then, I ween, the awestruck villagers
Could scarce sustain his tones so deeply charged
With hope, and faith, and gratitude, and joy.
But when they gazed !—in the mild lineaments
Of his majestic visage, they beheld
How beautiful is holiness, and deemed
That sure he was some spirit sent by God
To teach the way to Heaven !

And yet his voice
Was ofttimes sadder, than as they conceived
An Angel's voice would be, and though to soothe
The sorrows of all others ever seemed
His only end in life, perhaps he had
Griefs of his own of which he nothing spake ;
Else were his locks more grey, more pale his cheek,
Than one had thought who only saw his form
So stately and so tall.—

Once did they speak
To him of that most miserable man
Who here himself had slain,—and then his eye
Was glazed with stern compassion, and a tear,—
It was the first they e'er had seen him shed,
Though mercy was the attribute he loved
Dearest in God's own Son,—bedimmed its light
For a short moment ; yea, that hermit old
Wept,—and his saddened face angelical
Veiled with his withered hands,—then on their knees
He bade his children (so he loved to call
The villagers) kneel down ; and unto God
Pray for his brother's soul.—

Amid the dust
The hermit long hath slept,—and every one
That listened to the saint's delightful voice.
In yonder churchyard, near the eastern porch,
Close to the altar-wall, a little mound
As if by Nature shaped, and strewn by her
With every tender flower that sorrow loves,
Tradition calls his grave. On Sabbath-day,
The hind oft hears the legendary tale
Rehearsed by village moralist austere
With many a pious phrase; and not a child,
Whose trembling feet have scarcely learnt to walk,
But will conduct thee to the hallowed spot
And lisp the hermit's name.

Nor did the cave
That he long time from Nature tenanted
Remain unhonoured.—Duly every spring,
Upon the day he died, thither repaired
Many a pure spirit, to his memory
Chanting a choral hymn, composed by one
Who on his deathbed sat and closed his eyes.
"I am the resurrection and the life,"
Some old man then would, with a solemn voice,
Read from that Bible that so oft had blest
The Hermit's solitude with heavenly cheer.
This Book, sole relic of the sinless man,
Was from the dust kept sacred, and even now
Lies in yon box of undecaying yew,
And may it never fade!—

Stranger unknown!
Thou breath'st, at present, in the very cave
Where on the Hermit death most gently fell
Like a long-wished-for slumber. The great Lord,
Whose castle stands amid the music wild
Breathed from the bosom of an hundred glens,
In youth by nature taught to venerate
Things truly venerable, hither came
One year to view the fair solemnity:
And that the forest-weeds might not obstruct
The entrance of the cave, or worm defile
The soft green beauty of its mossy walls,
This massive door was from a fallen oak
Shaped rudely; but all other ornament,

That porch of living rock with woodbines wreathed,
And outer roof with many a pensile shrub
Most delicate, he with wise feeling left
To Nature, and her patient servant, Time!

Stranger! I know thee not: yet since thy feet
Have wandered here, I deem that thou art one
Whose heart doth love in silent communings
To walk with Nature, and from scenes like these
Of solemn sadness, to sublime thy soul
To high endurance of all earthly pains
Of mind or body; so that thou connect
With Nature's lovely and more lofty forms,
Congenial thoughts of grandeur or of grace
In moral being. All creation takes
The spirit of its character from him
Who looks thereon; and to a blameless heart,
Earth, air, and ocean, howsoe'er beheld,
Are pregnant with delight, while even the clouds,
Embathed in dying sunshine, to the base
Possess no glory, and to the wicked lower
As with avenging thunder.

This sweet glen,
How sweet it is thou feel'st, with sylvan rocks
Excluding all but one blue glimpse of sky
Above, and from the world that lies around
All but the faint remembrance, tempted once
To most unnatural murder, once sublimed
To the high temper of the seraphim:
And thus, though its mild character remained
Immutable,—with pious dread was shunned
As an unholy spot, or visited
With reverence, as a consecrated shrine.

Farewell! and grave this moral on thy heart,
That Nature smiles for ever on the good,—
But that all beauty dies with innocence!"

LINES

WRITTEN ON READING THE

MEMOIRS OF MISS ELISABETH SMITH.

Peace to the dead ! the voice of Nature cries,
Even o'er the grave where guilt or frailty lies ;
Compassion drives each sterner thought away,
And all seem good when mouldering in the clay.
For who amid the dim religious gloom,
The solemn Sabbath brooding o'er the tomb,
The holy stillness that suspends our breath
When the soul rests within the shade of death,
What heart could then withhold the pensive sigh
Reflection pays to poor mortality,
Nor, sunk in pity near allied to love,
E'en bless the being we could ne'er approve !
The headstrong will with innocence at strife,
The restless passions that deformed his life,
Desires that spurned at reason's weak control,
And dimmed the native lustre of the soul,
The look repulsive that like ice repressed
The friendly warmth that played within the breast,
The slighting word, through heedlessness severe,
Wounding the spirit that it ought to cheer,
Lie buried in the grave ! or if they live,
Remembrance only wakes them to forgive ;
While vice and error steal a soft relief
From the still twilight of a mellowing grief.
And oh ! how lovely do the tints return
Of every virtue sleeping in the urn !
Each grace that fleeted unobserved away,
Starts into life when those it decked decay ;
Regret fresh beauty on the corse bestows,
And self-reproach is mingled with our woes.

But nobler sorrows lift the musing mind,
When soaring spirits leave their frames behind,
Who walked the world in Nature's generous pride,
And, like a sunbeam, lightened as they died!
Hope, resignation, the sad soul beguile,
And Grief's tear drops 'mid Faith's celestial smile:
Then burns our being with a holy mirth
That owns no kindred with this mortal earth;
For hymning angels in blest vision wave
Their wings' bright glory o'er the seraph's grave!

Oh thou! whose soul, unmoved by earthly strife,
Led by the pole-star of eternal life,
Owned no emotion stained by touch of clay,
No thought that angels might not pleased survey;
Thou! whose calm course through Virtue's fields was run
From youth's fair morning to thy setting sun,
Nor vice e'er dared one little cloud to roll
O'er the bright beauty of thy spotless soul;
Thou! who secure in good works strong to save,
Resigned and happy, eyedst the opening grave,
And in the blooming summer of thy years
Scarce feltst regret to leave this vale of tears;
Oh! from thy throne amid the starry skies,
List to my words thus interwove with sighs,
And if the high resolves, the cherished pain
That prompt the weak but reverential strain,
If love of virtue ardent and sincere
Can win to mortal verse a cherub's ear,
Bend from thy radiant throne thy form divine,
And make the adoring spirit pure as thine!
When my heart muses o'er the long review
Of all thy bosom felt, thy reason knew,
O'er boundless learning free from boastful pride,
And patience humble though severely tried,
Judgment unclouded, passions thrice refined,
A heaven-aspiring loftiness of mind,
And, rare perfection! calm and sober sense
Combined with fancy's wild magnificence;
Struck with the pomp of Nature's wondrous plan,
I hail with joy the dignity of man,
And soaring high above life's roaring sea,
Spring to the dwelling of my God and Thee.

Short here thy stay! for souls of holiest birth
Dwell but a moment with the sons of earth;
To this dim sphere by God's indulgence given,
Their friends are angels, and their home is heaven.
The fairest rose in shortest time decays;
The sun, when brightest, soon withdraws his rays;
The dew that gleams like diamonds on the thorn,
Melts instantaneous at the breath of morn;
Too soon a rolling shade of darkness shrouds
The star that smiles amid the evening clouds;
And sounds that come so sweetly on the ear,
That the soul wishes every sense could hear,
Are as the Light's unwearied pinions fleet,
As scarce as beauteous, and as short as sweet.

Yet, though the unpolluted soul requires
Airs born in Heaven to fan her sacred fires,
And mounts to God exulting to be free
From fleshly chain that binds mortality,
The world is hallowed by her blest sojourn,
And glory dwells for ever round her urn!
Her skirts of beauty sanctify the air
That felt her breathings, and that heard her prayer;
Vice dies where'er the radiant vision trod,
And there e'en Atheists must believe in God!
Such the proud triumphs that the good achieve!
Such the blest gift that sinless spirits leave!
The parted soul in God-given strength sublime,
Streams undimmed splendour o'er unmeasured time;
Still on the earth the sainted hues survive,
Dead in the tomb, but in the heart alive.
In vain the tide of ages strives to roll
A bar to check the intercourse of soul;
The hovering spirits of the good and great
With fond remembrance own their former state,
And musing virtue often can behold
In vision high their plumes of wavy gold,
And drink with trancèd ear the silver sound
Of seraphs hymning on their nightly round.
By death untaught, our range of thought is small,
Bound by the attraction of this earthly ball.
Our sorrows and our joys, our hopes and fears,
Ignobly pent within a few short years;
But when our hearts have read Fate's mystic book,
On Heaven's gemmed sphere we lift a joyful look,

Hope turns to Faith, Faith glorifies the gloom,
And life springs forth exulting from the tomb!

Oh, blest ELIZA! though to me unknown
Thine eye's mild lustre and thy melting tone;
Though on this earth apart our lives were led,
Nor my love found thee till thy soul was fled;
Yet, can affection kiss thy silent clay,
And rend the glimmering veil of death away:
Fancy beholds with fixed, delighted eye,
Thy white-robed spirit gently gliding by;
Deep sinks thy smile into my quiet breast,
As moonlight steeps the ocean-wave in rest!
While thus, bright shade! thine eyes of mercy dwell
On that fair land thou lovedst of old so well,
What holy raptures through thy being flow,
To see thy memory blessing all below,
Virtue rekindle at thy grave her fires,
And vice repentant shun his low desires!
This the true Christian's heaven! on earth to see
The sovereign power of immortality
At war with sin, and in triumphant pride
Spreading the empire of the crucified.

Oft 'mid the calm of mountain solitude,
Where Nature's loveliness thy spirit wooed;
Where lonely cataracts with sullen roar
To thy hushed heart a fearful rapture bore,
And caverns moaning with the voice of night,
Steeped through the ear thy mind in strange delight
I feel thy influence on my heart descend
Like words of comfort whispered by a friend,
And every cloud in lovelier figures roll,
Shaped by the power of thy presiding soul!
And when, slow-sinking in a blaze of light,
The sun in glory bathes each radiant height,
Amid the glow thy form seraphic seems
To float refulgent with unborrowed beams;
For thou, like him, hadst still thy course pursued,
From thy own blessedness dispensing good;
Brightly that soul in life's fair morn arose,
And burned, like him, more glorious at its close.

But now, I feel my pensive spirit turn,
Where parents, brothers, sisters, o'er thee mourn.

For though to all unconscious time supplies
A strength of soul that stifles useless sighs;
And in our loneliest hours of grief is given
To our dim gaze a nearer glimpse of heaven,
Yet, human frailty pines in deep distress,
Even when a friend has soared to happiness,
And sorrow, selfish from excess of love,
Would glad recall the seraph from above!
And, chief, to thee! on whose delighted breast,
While, yet a babe, she played herself to rest,
Who rocked her cradle with requited care,
And blessed her sleeping with a silent prayer;
To thee, who first beheld, with watchful eye,
From her flushed cheek health's natural radiance fly,
And, though by fate denied the power to save,
Smoothed with kind care her passage to the grave,
When slow consumption led with fatal bloom
A rosy spectre smiling to the tomb;
The strain of comfort first to thee would flow,
But thou hast comforts man could ne'er bestow;
And e'en misfortune's long and gloomy roll
Wakes dreams of glory in thy stately soul.
For reason whispers, and religion proves,
That God by sorrow chasteneth whom he loves;
And suffering virtue smiles at misery's gloom,
Cheered by the light that burns beyond the tomb.

All Nature speaks of thy departed child,
The flowery meadow, and the mountain wild;
Of her the lark 'mid sunshine oft will sing,
And torrents flow with dirge-like murmuring!
The lake, that smiles to heaven a watery gleam,
Shows in the vivid beauty of a dream
Her, whose fine touch in mellowing hues arrayed
The misty summit and the woodland glade,
The sparkling depth that slept in waveless rest,
And verdant isles reflected on its breast.
As down the vale thy lonely footsteps stray,
While eve steals dimly on retiring day,
And the pale light that nameless calm supplies,
That holds communion with the promised skies,
When Nature's beauty overpowers distress,
And stars soft-burning kindle holiness,
Thy lips in passive resignation move,
And peace broods o'er thee on the wings of love.

The languid mien, the cheek of hectic dye,
The mournful beauty of the radiant eye,
The placid smile, the light and easy breath
Of nature blooming on the brink of death,
When the fair phantom breathed in twilight balm
A dying vigour and deceitful calm,
The tremulous voice that ever loved to tell
Thy fearful heart, that all would soon be well,
Steal on thy memory, and though tears will fall
O'er scenes gone by that thou wouldst fain recall,
Yet oft has faith with deeper bliss beguiled
A parent weeping her departed child,
Than love maternal, when her baby lay
Hushed at her breast, or smiling in its play,
And, as some glimpse of infant fancy came,
Murmuring in scarce-heard lisp some broken name.
Thou feel'st no more grief's palpitating start,
Nor the drear night hangs heavy on thy heart.
Though sky and star may yet awhile divide
Thy mortal being from thy bosom's pride,
Your spirits mingle—while to thine is given
A loftier nature from the touch of heaven.

EXTRACT FROM AN UNFINISHED POEM,

ENTITLED "THE HEARTH."

My soul, behold the beauty of his home!
The very heavens look down with gracious smiles
Upon its holy rest. How bright a green
Sleeps round the dwelling of two loving hearts!
The air lies hushed above the peaceful roof,
As if it felt the sanctity within.
On glides the river with a tranquil flow,
Delighting in his music, as he bathes
The happy bounds where happiness doth stray.
—I see them sitting by each other's side,
In the heart's silent secresy! I hear
The breath of meditation from their souls.
They speak: a soft, subduing tenderness,
Born of devotion, innocence and bliss,
Steals from their bosoms in a silver voice
That makes a pious hymning melody.
They look: a gleam of light as sadly sweet
As if they listened to some mournful tale,
Swims in their eyes that almost melt to tears.
They smile: oh! never did such languor steal
From lustre of two early-risen stars
When all the silent heavens appear their own.
And lo! an infant shows his gladsome face!
His beautiful and shining golden head
Lies on his mother's bosom, like a rose
Fallen on a lilied bank. A dewy light
Meets the soft smiling of his upward eye,
As in the playful restlessness of joy
He clings around her neck, and fondly strives
To reach the kisses mantling from her soul.
And now, the baby in his cradle sleeps,
Hushed by his mother's prayer! How soft her tread
Falls, like a snowflake, on the noiseless floor!

She almost fears to breathe too fond a sigh
Towards the father of her darling child.
—Sleep broods o'er all the house : the mother's heart,
Beating within her husband's folding arms,
Dreams of sweet looks of waking happiness,
Unceasing greetings of congenial thought,
Deep blendings of existence ; till awoke
By the long stirring of delightful dreams,
She with a silent prayer of thankfulness
Leans gently-breathing on the breast of love !
—Can guilt or misery ever enter here ?
Ah ! no ; the spirit of domestic peace,
Though calm and gentle as the brooding dove,
And ever murmuring forth a quiet song,
Guards, powerful as the sword of cherubim,
The hallowed porch. She hath a heavenly smile
That sinks into the sullen soul of vice,
And wins him o'er to virtue, so transforms
The purpose of his heart, that sudden shame
Smothers the curses struggling into birth,
And makes him turn an eye of kindliness
Even on the blessings that he came to blast.
It is a lofty thought, O guardian love !
To think that he who lives beneath thine eye
Can never be polluted. Pestilence,
The dire, contagious pestilence of sin,
May walk abroad, and lay its victims low ;
But they, whose upright spirits worship thee,
Breathe not the tainted air—they live apart
Unharmed, as Israel's heaven-protected sons,
When the exterminating angel passed
With steps of blood o'er Egypt's groaning land.
Then ever keep unbroken and unstained
The Sabbath-sanctity of home ; the shrine
Where spirit in its rapture worships God.
By Heaven beloved for ever are the walls
That duly every morn and evening hear
Our whispered hymns ! Eternity broods there.
Yea ! like a father smiling on a band
Of happy children, the Almighty One
Dwells in the midst of us, appearing oft
In visible glory, while our filial souls,
Made pure beneath the watching of his eye,
Walk stately in the conscious praise of Heaven !

EDITH AND NORA.

A PASTORAL POET'S DREAM.

She hath risen up from her morning prayer,
And chained the waves of her golden hair,
Hath kissed her sleeping sister's cheek,
And breathed the blessing she might not speak,
Lest the whisper should break the dream that smiled
Round the snow-white brow of the sinless child.
Her radiant lamb and her purpling dove
Have ta'en their food from the hand they love;
The low deep coo and the plaintive bleat
In the morning calm, how clear and sweet!
Ere the sun has warmed the dawning hours,
She hath watered the glow of her garden flowers,
And welcomed the hum of the earliest bee
In the moist bloom working drowsily;
Then up the flow of the rocky rill
She trips away to the pastoral hill;
And, as she lifts her glistening eyes
In the joy of her heart to the dewy skies,
She feels that her sainted parents bless
The life of their orphan Shepherdess.

'Tis a lonely glen! but the happy child
Hath friends whom she meets in the morning-wild!
As on she trips, her native stream,
Like her hath awoke from a joyful dream,
And glides away by her twinkling feet,
With a face as bright and a voice as sweet.
In the osier bank the ouzel sitting,
Hath heard her steps, and away is flitting
From stone to stone, as she glides along,
Then sinks in the stream with a broken song.
The lapwing, fearless of his nest,
Stands looking round with his delicate crest,

Or a love-like joy is in his cry,
As he wheels and darts and glances by.
Is the heron asleep on the silvery sand
Of his little lake? Lo! his wings expand
As a dreamy thought, and withouten dread,
Cloud-like he floats o'er the maiden's head.
She looks to the birchwood glade, and lo!
There is browsing there the mountain-roe,
Who lifts up her gentle eyes, nor moves
As on glides the form whom all nature loves.
Having spent in heaven an hour of mirth,
The lark drops down to the dewy earth,
And as silence smooths his yearning breast
In the gentle fold of his lowly nest,
The linnet takes up the hymn, unseen
In the yellow broom or the bracken green.
And now, as the morning-hours are glowing,
From the hill-side cots the cocks are crowing,
And the shepherd's dog is barking shrill
From the mist fast rising from the hill,
And the shepherd's self, with locks of grey,
Hath blessed the Maiden on her way!
And now she sees her own dear flock
On a verdant mound beneath the rock,
All close together in beauty and love,
Like the small fair clouds in heaven above,
And her innocent soul at the peaceful sight
Is swimming o'er with a still delight.

And how shall sweet Edith pass the day,
From her home and her sister so far away,
With none to whom she may speak the while,
Or share the silence and the smile,
When the stream of thought flows calm and deep,
And the face of joy is like that of sleep?
Fear not—the long, still summer-day
On downy wings hath sailed away,
And is melting unawares in even,
Like a pure cloud in the heart of heaven,
Nor weariness nor woe hath paid
One visit to the happy maid
Sitting in sunshine or in shade.
For many a wild tale doth she know,
Framed in these valleys long ago

By pensive shepherds, unto whom
The sweet breath of the heather-bloom
Brought inspiration, and the sky
Folding the hill-tops silently,
And airs so spirit-like, and streams
Aye murmuring through a world of dreams.
A hundred plaintive tunes hath she—
A hundred chants of sober glee—
And she hath sung them o'er and o'er,—
As on some solitary shore,
'Tis said the mermaid oft doth sing
Beneath some cliff's o'ershadowing,
While melteth o'er the waters clear
A song which there is none to hear!
Still at the close of each wild strain
Hath gentle Edith lived again
O'er long-past hours—while smiles and sighs
Obeyed their own loved melodies.
Now rose to sight the hawthorn glade,
Where that old blind Musician played
So blithely to the dancing ring—
Or, in a fit of sorrowing,
Sung mournful songs of other years
That filled his own dim eyes with tears.
And then the Sabbath seemed to rise
In stillness o'er the placid skies,
And from the small Kirk in the dell
Came the clear chime of holy bell,
Solemnly ceasing, when appeared
The grey-haired man beloved and feared—
The Man of God—whose eyes were filled
With visions in the heavens beheld,
And rightfully inspirèd fear,
Whose yoke, like love's, is light to bear.
—And thus sole-sitting on the brae,
From human voices far away,
Even like the flowers round Edith's feet,
Shone forth her fancies wild or sweet;
Some in the shades of memory
Unfolding out reluctantly,
But breathing from that tender gloom
A faint, ethereal, pure perfume;
Some burning in their full-blown pride,
And by the sun's love beautified;

None withered—for the air is holy,
Of a pure spirit's melancholy;
And God's own gracious eye hath smiled
On the sorrows of this orphan child;
Therefore, her parents' grave appears
Green, calm, and sunbright through her tears,
Beneath the deepening hush of years.

An image of young Edith's life,
This one still day—no noise—no strife—
Alike calm—morning—noon—and even—
And earth to her as pure as heaven.

Now night comes wavering down the sky:
The clouds like ships at anchor lie,
All gathered in the glimmering air,
After their pleasant voyage: there
One solitary bark glides on
So slow, that its haven will ne'er be won.
But a wandering wind hath lent it motion,
And the last sail hath passed o'er the heavenly ocean.
Are these the hills so steeped by day,
In a greenness that seemed to mock decay,
And that stole from the sun so strong a light,
That it well might dare the eclipse of night?
Where is the sound that filled the air
Around, and above, and everywhere?
Soft wild pipes hushed! and a world of wings
All shut with their radiant shiverings!
The wild bees now are all at rest
In their earthen cell or their mossy nest,
Save when some lated labourers come
From the far-off hills with a weary hum,
And drop down 'mid the flowers, till morn
Shall awaken to life each tiny horn.
Dew sprinkles sleep on every flower,
And each bending stalk has lost its power—
No toils have they, but in beauty blest,
They seem to partake in nature's rest.
Sleep calms the bosom of the earth,
And a dream just moves it in faintest mirth.

The slumber of the hills and sky
Hath hushed into a reverie

The soul of Edith—by degrees,
With half-closed eyes she nothing sees
But the glimmer of twilight stretched afar,
And one bright solitary star,
That comes like an angel with his beams,
To lead her on through the world of dreams,
She feels the soft grass beneath her head,
And the smell of flowers around her shed,
Breathing of earth,—as yet, she knows
Whence is the sound that past her flows
(The flowery fount in its hill-side cell),
But a beauty there is which she cannot tell
To her soul that beholds it, spread all around;
And she feels a rapture, oh! more profound
Than e'er by a dream was breathed, or driven
Through a bosom, all suddenly filled with heaven.

Oh! come ye from heaven ye blessed Things,
So silent with your silvery wings
Folded in moonlight glimmerings?
—They have dropt like two soft gleams of light,
Those gracious Forms, on the verdant height
Where Edith in her slumber lies,
With calm face meeting the calm skies,
Like one whose earthly course is o'er,
And sleepeth to awake no more!
Gazing upon the child they stand,
Till one with small soft silent hand
Lifts from that brow the golden hair—
"Was ever mortal face so fair?
God gives to us the sleeping maid!"
And scarcely are the kind words said,
Than Edith's lovely neck is wreathed
With arms as soft as zephyrs breathed
O'er sleeping lilies,—and slowly raised
The still form of the child, amazed
To see those visages divine,
And eyes so filled with pity, shine
On her, a simple shepherdess,
An orphan in the wilderness!

"O, happy child! who livest in mirth
And joy of thine own on this sinful earth,
Whose heart, like a lonely stream, keeps singing,
Or, like a holy bell, is ringing

So sweetly in the silent wild—
Wilt thou come with us, thou happy child,
And live in a land where woe and pain
Are heard but as a far-off strain
Of mournful music,—where the breath
Of life is murmuring not of death ;
And happiness alone doth weep,
And nought but bliss doth break our sleep.
Wilt thou come with us to the Land of Dreams ?"
—A kiss as soft as moonlight seems
To fall on Edith's brow and cheek—
As that voice no more is heard to speak ;
And bright before her half-closed eyes
Stand up these shapes from Paradise,
Breathing sweet fear into her heart !
—She trembleth lest their beauty part,
Cloud-like, ere she be full awake,
And leave her weeping for their sake,
An orphan shepherdess again,
Left all by herself in that lonely glen !

" Fear not, sweet Edith ! to come along
With us, though the voice of the Fairy's song
Sound strange to thy soul thus murmuring near—
Fear not, for thou hast nought to fear !
Oft hast thou heard our voice before,
Hymn-like pass by thy cottage door
When thou and thy sister were at prayers,—
Oft hast thou heard it in wild low airs,
Circling thy couch on the heathery hill,—
And when all the stars in heaven were still,
As their images in the lake below,
That was our voice that seemed to flow,
Like softest waters through the night,
The music breathed from our delight.
Then, come with us, sweet Edith ! come
And dwell in the Lake-Fairy's home ;
And happier none can be in heaven,
Than we in those green valleys, given
By Nature's kind beneficence
To us, who live in innocence ;
And on our gentle missions go,
Up to the human world of woe,
To make by our music mortal elves
For a dream as happy as ourselves ;

All flitting back ere the morn arise,
To our own untroubled Paradise."

"O waft me there, ere my dream is gone,
For dreams have a wild world all their own!
And never was vision like to this—
O waft me away ere I wake from bliss!
But where is my little sister? Where
The child whom her mother with dying prayer
Put into my bosom, and bade us be
True to each other, as on the sea
Two loving birds, whom a wave may divide,
But who float back soon to each other's side!
Bring Nora here, and we two will take
Our journey with you deep down the Lake,
And let its waters for ever close
O'er the upper world of human woes,
For young though we be, and have known no strife,
Yet we start at the shadows of mortal life;
And many a tear have we two shed
In each other's arms, on an orphan bed,—
So let Nora to my heart be given,
And with you will we fly, and trust in Heaven."

A sound of parting wings is heard,
As when at night some wandering bird
Flits by us, absent from its nest
Beyond the hour of the songster's rest.
For, the younger Fairy away hath flown,
And hath Nora found in her sleep alone,
Hath raised her up between her wings,
And lulled her with gentlest murmurings,
And borne her over plain and steep
With soft smooth glide that breaks not sleep,
And laid her down as still as death
By Edith's side on the balmy heath,
And all ere twice ten waves have broke
On the Lake's smooth sand, or the aged oak
Hath ceased to shiver its leaves so red
Beneath the breeze that just touched its head.
The heath-flowers all are shining bright,
And every star has its own soft light,
And all the quiet clouds are there,
And the same sweet sound is in the air,

From stream and echo mingling well
In the silence of the glimmering dell,—
But no more is seen the radiant fold
Of Fairy-wings bedropt with gold,
Nor those sweet human faces! They
Have melted like the dew away,
And Edith and Nora never more
Shall be sitting seen on the earthly shore!
For they drift away with peaceful motion,
Like birds into the heart of ocean,
Some silent spot secure from storms—
Who float on with their soft-plumed forms
Whiter than the white sea-foam,
Still dancing on from home to home;
Fair creatures! in their lonely glee
Happier than stars in heaven or sea.

Long years are past—and every stone
Of the orphans' cot is with moss o'ergrown,
And wild-stalks beautiful and tall
Hang o'er the little garden-wall,
And the clear well within the rock
Lies with its smiling calm unbroke
By dipping pitcher! There the hives!
But no faint feeble hum survives—
Dead is that cottage once so sweet,
Shrouded as in a winding-sheet—
Nor even the sobbing of the air
Mourns o'er the life that once was there!

O happy ye! who have flown afar
From the sword of those ruthless men of war,
That, for many a year, have bathed in blood
Scotland's green glens of solitude!
Orphans were ye—but your lips were calm
When together ye sang the evening psalm;
Nor sound of terror on the breeze,
E'er startled you up from your humble knees,
When on the dewy daisied sod,
In heaven ye worshipped your fathers' God,
After the simple way approved
By men whom God and angels loved.
Dark—dark days come—when holy prayers
Are sinful held, and snow-white hairs

By ruffian hands are torn and strewed,
Even where the old man bows to God!
Sabbath is heavy to the soul,
When no kirk-bell is heard to toll,
Struck dumb as ice—no bridal show
Shines cheerful through these days of woe;
Now are the blest baptismal rites
Done by lone streams, in moonless nights;
Now every lover loves in dread;
Sleep flies from cradle and from bed;
The silent meal in fear is blest;
In fear the mother gives her breast
To the infant, whose dim eyes can trace
A trouble in her smiling face.
The little girl her hair has braided,
Over a brow by terror shaded;
And virgins, in youth's lovely years,
Who fear not death, have far worse fears.
Wailing is heard o'er all the land,
For, by day and night, a bloody hand
A bloody sword doth widely wave,
And peace is none, but in the grave.

But Edith and Nora lead happy hours
In the Queen Lake-Fairy's palace-bowers,
Nor troubles from the world of ill
E'er reach that kingdom calm and still;
A dream-like kingdom sunk below
The fatal reach of waking woe!
There, radiant water-drops are shed,
Like strings of pearl round each orphan's head,
Glistening with many a lovely ray,
Yet, all so light, that they melt away,
Unfelt by the locks they beautify—
The flowers that bloom there never die,
Breathing for ever through the calm
A gentle breath of honeyed balm;
Nor ever happy fairy grieves
O'er the yellow fall of the forest leaves;
Nor mourns to hear the rustling dry
Of their faded pride in the frosty sky;
For all is young and deathless there,
All things unlike—but all things fair.
Nor is that saddest beauty known
That lies in the thoughts of pleasure flown;

Nor doth joy ever need to borrow
A charm to its soul from the smiles of sorrow.

Nor are the upper world and skies
Withheld, when they list, from these orphans' eyes—
The shadow of green trees on earth
Falls on the lake—and the small bird's mirth
Doth often through the silence ring
In sweet, shrill, merry jargoning—
So that the orphans almost think
They are lying again on the broomy brink
Of their native Dee—and scarcely know
If the change hath been to bliss or woe,
As, 'mid that music wild, they seem
To start back to life from a fairy dream.
So all that most beautiful is above
Sends down to their rest its soul of love;
Nor have they in their bliss forgot
The walls, roof, and door, of their native cot;
Nor the bed in which their parents died,
And they themselves slept side by side!
They know that Heaven hath brought them here,
To shield them from the clouds of fear;
And therefore on their sinless breasts
When they go to sleep the Bible rests,
The Bible that they read of old,
Beside their lambs in the mountain-fold,
Unseen but by one gracious eye,
That blest their infant piety!

On what doth the wondering shepherd gaze,
As o'er Loch-Ken the moonlight plays,
And in the planet's silvery glow,
Far shines the smooth sand, white as snow?
In heaven or lake there is no breeze,
Yet a glimmering sail that shepherd sees,
Swan-like steer on its stately way
Into the little crescent bay;
Now jocundly its fair gleam rearing,
And now in darkness disappearing,
Till 'mid the water-lilies riding
It hangs, and to the green shore gliding
Two lovely creatures silently
Sit down beneath the star-light sky,

And look around, in deep delight,
On all the pure still smiles of night.
As they sit in beauty on the shore,
The shepherd feels he has seen before
The quiet of their heavenly eyes :
"'Tis the orphans come back from paradise,
Edith and Nora! They now return,
When this woe-worn land hath ceased to mourn.
We thought them dead, but at Heaven's command,
For years they have lived in Fairy land,
And they glide back by night to their little cot,
O absent long, but by none forgot!"

The boat with its snow-white sail is gone,
And the creatures it brought to shore are flown ;
Still the crowd of water-lilies shake,
And a long bright line shines o'er the lake,
But nought else tells that a bark was near ;
While the wildered shepherd seems to hear
A wild hymn wandering through the wood,
Till it dies up the mountain solitude ;
And a dreamy thought, as the sounds depart,
Of Edith and Nora comes o'er his heart.

At morning's first pure silent glow,
A band of simple shepherds go
To the orphans' cot, and there they behold
The dove so bright, with its plumes of gold,
And the radiant lamb, that used to glide
So spirit-like by fair Edith's side.
Fair creatures! that no more were seen
On the sunny thatch or the flowery green,
Since the lovely sisters had flown away,
And left their cottage to decay!
Back to this world returned again,
They seem in sadness and in pain,
And coo and bleat is like the breath
Of sorrow mourning over death.

Lo! smiling on their rushy bed,
Lie Edith and Nora—embraced—and dead!
A gentle frost has closed their eyes,
And hushed—just hushed—their balmy sighs.
Over their lips, yet rosy red,
A faint, pale, cold decay is shed ;

A dimness hangs o'er their golden hair,
That sadly tells no life is there;
There beats no heart, no current flows
In bosoms sunk in such repose;
Limbs may not that chill quiet have,
Unless laid ready for the grave.
Silence lies there from face to feet,
And the bed she loves best is a winding-sheet.

Let the coffin sink down soft and slowly,
And calm be the burial of the holy!
One long look in that mournful cell—
Let the green turf heave—and then, farewell!
No need of tears! in this churchyard shade
Oft had the happy orphans played
Above these quiet graves! and well they lie
After a calm bright life of purity,
Beneath the flowers that once sprang to meet
The motion of their now still feet!
The mourners are leaving the buried clay
To the holy hush of the Sabbath-day,
When a lamb comes sadly bleating by,
And a dove soft wavering through the sky,
And both lie down without a sound,
In beauty on the funeral mound!
What may these lovely creatures be?
—Two sisters who died in infancy,
And thus had those they loved attended,
And been by those they loved befriended!
Whate'er—fair creatures! might be their birth,
Never more were they seen on earth;
But to young and old belief was given
That with Edith and Nora they went to heaven.

LINES WRITTEN IN A BURIAL-GROUND

ON THE NORTHERN COAST OF THE HIGHLANDS.

How mournfully this burial-ground
Sleeps 'mid old Ocean's solemn sound,
Who rolls his bright and sunny waves
All round these deaf and silent graves!
The cold wan light that glimmers here,
The sickly wild-flowers may not cheer;
If here, with solitary hum,
The wandering mountain-bee doth come,
'Mid the pale blossoms short his stay,
To brighter leaves he booms away.
The Sea-bird, with a wailing sound,
Alighteth softly on a mound,
And, like an image, sitting there
For hours amid the doleful air,
Seemeth to tell of some dim union,
Some wild and mystical communion,
Connecting with his parent sea
This lonesome, stoneless cemetery.

This may not be the burial-place
Of some extinguished kingly race,
Whose name on earth no longer known
Hath mouldered with the mouldering stone.
That nearest grave, yet brown with mould,
Seems but one summer-twilight old;
Both late and frequent hath the bier
Been on its mournful visit here,
And yon green spot of sunny rest
Is waiting for its destined guest.

I see no little kirk—no bell
On Sabbath tinkleth through this dell.

How beautiful those graves and fair,
That, lying round the house of prayer,
Sleep in the shadow of its grace!
But death has chosen this rueful place
For his own undivided reign!
And nothing tells that e'er again
The sleepers will forsake their bed—
Now, and for everlasting dead,
For Hope with Memory seems fled!

Wild-screaming Bird! unto the sea
Winging thy flight reluctantly,
Slow-floating o'er these grassy tombs
So ghost-like, with thy snow-white plumes,
At once from thy wild shriek I know
What means this place so steeped in woe!
Here, they who perished on the deep
Enjoy at last unrocking sleep,
For Ocean, from his wrathful breast,
Flung them into this haven of rest,
Where shroudless, coffinless they lie,—
'Tis the shipwrecked seaman's cemetery.

Here seamen old, with grizzled locks,
Shipwrecked before on desert rocks,
And by some wandering vessel taken
From sorrows that seem God-forsaken,
Home-bound, here have met the blast
That wrecked them on Death's shore at last!
Old friendless men, who had no tears
To shed, nor any place for fears
In hearts by misery fortified,—
And, without terror, sternly died.
Here, many a creature, moving bright
And glorious in full manhood's might,
Who dared with an untroubled eye
The tempest brooding in the sky,
And loved to hear that music rave,
And danced above the mountain-wave,
Hath quaked on this terrific strand,—
All flung like sea-weeds to the land;
A whole crew lying side by side,
Death-dashed at once in all their pride.
And here, the bright-haired, fair-faced boy,
Who took with him all earthly joy

From one who weeps both night and day,
For her sweet son borne far away,
Escaped at last the cruel deep,
In all his beauty lies asleep;
While she would yield all hopes of grace
For one kiss of his pale, cold face!

O I could wail in lonely fear,
For many a woeful ghost sits here,
All weeping with their fixèd eyes!
And what a dismal sound of sighs
Is mingling with the gentle roar
Of small waves breaking on the shore;
While ocean seems to sport and play
In mockery of its wretched prey!
And lo! a white-winged vessel sails
In sunshine, gathering all the gales
Fast-freshening from yon isle of pines,
That o'er the clear sea waves and shines.
I turn me to the ghostly crowd,
All smeared with dust, without a shroud,
And silent every blue-swollen lip!
Then gazing on the sunny ship,
And listening to the gladsome cheers
Of all her thoughtless mariners,
I seem to hear in every breath
The hollow under-tones of Death,
Who, all unheard by those who sing,
Keeps tune with low wild murmuring,
And points with his lean bony hand
To the pale ghosts sitting on this strand,
Then dives beneath the rushing prow,
Till on some moonless night of woe
He drives her shivering from the steep
Down—down a thousand fathoms deep.

THE FRENCH EXILE.

My Mary! wipe those tears away
That dim thy lovely eyes,
Nor on that wild, romantic lay,
That leads through fairy worlds astray,
Waste all thy human sighs.
Come hither on the lightsome wing
Of innocence, and with thee bring
Thy smiles that warmly fall
Into the heart with sunny glow;
When once he tunes his harp to sing,
Thou wilt not be in haste to go.—
—The Minstrel's in the Hall!

Quickly she started from her seat,
With blushing, virgin grace;
Her long hair floating like a stream,
While through it shone with tender gleam
Her calm and pensive face!
Soon as she heard the Minstrel's name,
Across her silent cheek there came
A blithe yet pitying ray;
For often had she heard me tell
Of the French Exile, blind and lame,
Who sung and touched the harp so well—
—Old Louis Fontenaye.

Silent he sat his harp beside,
Upon an antique chair;
And something of his country's pride
Did, exiled though he was, reside
Throughout his foreign air!
A snow-white dog of Gascon breed,
With ribbons decked, was there to lead
His dark steps,—and secure

The paltry alms that traveller threw,
Alms that in truth he much did need,
For every child that saw him, knew
That he was wretched poor.

His harp with figures quaint and rare
Was decked, and strange device;
There, you beheld the mermaid fair
In mirror braid her sea-green hair,
In wild and sportive guise.
There, on the imitated swell
The Tritons blew the wreathèd shell
Around some fairy isle;
—He framed it, when almost a child,
Long ere he left his native dell:
Who saw the antic carving wild
Could scarce forbear to smile.

With silver voice, the lady said,
She knew how well he sung!—
—Starting, he raised his hoary head,
To hear from that kind-hearted maid
His own dear native tongue.
He seemed as if restored to sight,
So suddenly his eyes grew bright
When that music touched his ear;
The lilied fields of France, I ween,
Before him swam in softened light,
And the sweet waters of the Seine
They all are murmuring near.

Even now, his voice was humbly sad,
Subdued by woe and want;
So crushed his heart, no wish he had
To feel for one short moment glad,
That hopeless Emigrant!
—The aged man is young again,
And cheerily chants a playful strain
While his face with rapture shines;—
How rapidly his fingers glance
O'er the glad strings! his giddy brain
Drinks in the chorus and the dance,
Beneath his clustering vines.

We saw it was a darling tune
With his old heart,—a cheer
That made all pains forgotten soon ;—
Gay looked he as a bird in June
That loves itself to hear.
Nor undelightful were the lays
That warm and flowery sang the praise
Of France's lovely Queen,
When with the Ladies of her Court,
Like Flora and her train of fays,
She came at summer-eve to sport
Along the banks of Seine.

But fades the sportive roundelay ;
Both harp and voice are still ;
The dear delusion will not stay,
The murmuring Seine flows far away,
Sink cot and vine-clad hill !
Though his cheated soul is wounded sore,
His aged visage dimmed once more,
The smile will not depart ;
But struggles 'mid the wrinkles there,
For he clings unto the parting shore,
And the morn of life so melting-fair,
Still lingers in his heart.

Ah me ! what touching silentness
Slept o'er the face divine
Of my dear maid ! methought each tress
Hung 'mid the light of tenderness,
Like clouds in soft moonshine.
With artful innocence she tried
In languid smiles from me to hide
Her tears that fell like rain ;
But when she felt I must perceive
The drops of heavenly pity glide,
She owned she could not choose but grieve,
So gladsome was the strain !

If when his griefs once more began,
His eyes had been restored,
And met her face so still and wan,
How had that aged, exiled man
The pitying Saint adored !

Yet though the angel light that played
Around her face, pierced not the shade
That veiled his eyeballs dim,—
Yet to his ear her murmurs stole,
And, with a faltering voice, he said
That he felt them sink into his soul
Like the blessed Virgin's hymn!

He prayed that Heaven its flowers would strew
On both our heads through life,
With such a tone, as told he knew
She was a virgin fond and true,
Mine own betrothèd wife!
And something too he strove to say
In praise of our green isle,—how they
Her generous children, though at war
With France, and both on field and wave
Encountering oft in fierce array,
Would not from home or quiet grave
Her exiled sons debar!

Long was the aged Harper gone
Ere Mary well could speak,—
So I cheered her soul with loving tone,
And, happy that she was my own,
I kissed her dewy cheek.
And, when once more I saw the ray
Of mild-returning pleasure play
Within her glistening eyes,
I bade the gentle maiden go
And read again that Fairy lay,
Since she could weep, 'mid fancied woe,
O'er real miseries.

THE THREE SEASONS OF LOVE.

With laughter swimming in thine eye,
That told youth's heartfelt revelry;
And motion changeful as the wing
Of swallow wakened by the spring;
With accents blithe as voice of May
Chanting glad Nature's roundelay;
Circled by joy like planet bright
That smiles 'mid wreathes of dewy light,—
Thy image such, in former time,
When thou, just entering on thy prime,
And woman's sense in thee combined
Gently with childhood's simplest mind,
First taught'st my sighing soul to move
With hope towards the heaven of love!

Now years have given my Mary's face
A thoughtful and a quiet grace:—
Though happy still,—yet chance distress
Hath left a pensive loveliness;
Fancy hath tamed her fairy gleams,
And thy heart broods o'er home-born dreams!
Thy smiles, slow-kindling now and mild,
Shower blessings on a darling child;
Thy motion slow, and soft thy tread,
As if round thy hushed infant's bed!
And when thou speak'st, thy melting tone,
That tells thy heart is all my own,
Sounds sweeter, from the lapse of years,
With the wife's love, the mother's fears!

By thy glad youth and tranquil prime
Assured, I smile at hoary time!
For thou art doomed in age to know
The calm that wisdom steals from woe;

The holy pride of high intent,
The glory of a life well-spent.
When, earth's affections nearly o'er,
With Peace behind, and Faith before,
Thou render'st up again to God,
Untarnished by its frail abode,
Thy lustrous soul,—then harp and hymn,
From bands of sister seraphim,
Asleep will lay thee, till thine eye
Open in Immortality.

MY COTTAGE.

"One small spot
Where my tired mind may rest and call it *home.*
There is a magic in that little word;
It is a mystic circle that surrounds
Comforts and virtues never known beyond
The hallowed limit."

SOUTHEY'S *Hymn to the Penates.*

HERE have I found at last a home of peace
To hide me from the world; far from its noise,
To feed that spirit, which, though sprung from earth,
And linked to human beings by the bond
Of earthly love, hath yet a loftier aim
Than perishable joy, and through the calm
That sleeps amid the mountain-solitude,
Can hear the billows of eternity,
And hear delighted.

Many a mystic gleam,
Lovely though faint, of imaged happiness
Fell on my youthful heart, as oft her light
Smiles on a wandering cloud, ere the fair Moon
Hath risen in the sky. And oh! Ye dreams
That to such spiritual happiness could shape
The lonely reveries of my boyish days,
Are ye at last fulfilled? Ye fairy scenes,
That to the doubting gaze of prophecy
Rose lovely, with your fields of sunny green,
Your sparkling rivulets and hanging groves
Of more than rainbow lustre, where the swing
Of woods primeval darkened the still depth
Of lakes bold-sweeping round their guardian hills
Even like the arms of Ocean, where the roar
Sullen and far from mountain cataract
Was heard amid the silence, like a thought

Of solemn mood that tames the dancing soul
When swarming with delights;—Ye fairy scenes!
Fancied no more, but bursting on my heart
In living beauty, with adoring song
I bid you hail! and with as holy love
As ever beautified the eye of saint
Hymning his midnight orisons, to you
I consecrate my life,—till the dim stain
Left by those worldly and unhallowed thoughts
That taint the purest soul, by bliss destroyed,
My spirit travel like a summer sun,
Itself all glory, and its path all joy.

Nor will the musing penance of the soul,
Performed by moonlight, or the setting sun,
To hymn of swinging oak, or the wild flow
Of mountain-torrent, ever lead her on
To virtue, but through peace. For Nature speaks
A parent's language, and, in tones as mild
As e'er hushed infant on its mother's breast,
Wins us to learn her lore. Yea! even to guilt,
Though in her image something terrible
Weigh down his being with a load of awe,
Love mingles with her wrath, like tender light
Streamed o'er a dying storm. And thus where'er
Man feels as man, the earth is beautiful.
His blessings sanctify even senseless things,
And the wide world in cheerful loveliness
Returns to him its joy. The summer air,
Whose glittering stillness sleeps within his soul,
Stirs with its own delight: The verdant earth,
Like beauty waking from a happy dream,
Lies smiling: Each fair cloud to him appears
A pilgrim travelling to the shrine of peace;
And the wild wave, that wantons on the sea,
A gay though homeless stranger. Ever blest
The man who thus beholds the golden chain
Linking his soul to outward Nature fair,
Full of the living God!

And where, ye haunts
Of grandeur and of beauty! shall the heart,
That yearns for high communion with its God,
Abide, if e'er its dreams have been of you?
The loveliest sounds, forms, hues, of all the earth

Linger delighted here : Here guilt might come,
With sullen soul abhorring Nature's joy,
And in a moment be restored to Heaven.
Here sorrow, with a dimness o'er his face,
Might be beguiled to smiles,—almost forget
His sufferings, and, in Nature's living book,
Read characters so lovely, that his heart
Would, as it blessed them, feel a rising swell
Almost like joy !—O earthly paradise !
Of many a secret anguish hast thou healed
Him, who now greets thee with a joyful strain.

And oh ! if in those elevated hopes
That lean on virtue,—in those high resolves
That bring the future close upon the soul,
And nobly dare its dangers ;—if in joy
Whose vital spring is more than innocence,
Yea ! Faith and Adoration !—if the soul
Of man may trust to these,—and they are strong,
Strong as the prayer of dying penitent,—
My being shall be bliss. For witness, Thou !
Oh Mighty One ! whose saving love has stolen
On the deep peace of moonbeams to my heart,—
Thou ! who with looks of mercy oft has cheered
The starry silence, when, at noon of night,
On some wild mountain thou hast not declined
The homage of thy lonely worshipper,—
Bear witness, Thou ! that, both in joy and grief,
The love of nature long hath been with me
The love of virtue :—that the solitude
Of the remotest hills to me hath been
Thy temple :—that the fountain's happy voice
Hath sung thy goodness, and thy power has stunned
My spirit in the roaring cataract !

Such solitude to me ! Yet are there hearts,—
Worthy of good men's love, nor unadorned
With sense of moral beauty,— to the joy
That dwells within the Almighty's outward shrine,
Senseless and cold. Ay, there are men who see
The broad sun sinking in a blaze of light,
Nor feel their disembodied spirits hail
With adoration the departing God ;
Who on the night-sky, when a cloudless moon
Glides in still beauty through unnumbered stars,

Can turn the eye unmoved, as if a wall
Of darkness screened the glory from their souls.
With humble pride I bless the Holy One
For sights to these denied. And oh! how oft
In seasons of depression,—when the lamp
Of life burned dim, and all unpleasant thoughts
Subdued the proud aspirings of the soul,—
When doubts and fears withheld the timid eye
From scanning scenes to come, and a deep sense
Of human frailty turned the past to pain,
How oft have I remembered that a world
Of glory lay around me, that a source
Of lofty solace lay in every star,
And that no being need behold the sun,
And grieve, that knew WHO hung him in the sky.
Thus unperceived I woke from heavy grief
To airy joy: and seeing that the mind
Of man, though still the image of his God,
Leaned by his will on various happiness,
I felt that all was good; that faculties,
Though low, might constitute, if rightly used,
True wisdom; and when man hath here attained
The purpose of his being, he will sit
Near Mercy's throne, whether his course hath been
Prone on the earth's dim sphere, or, as with wing
Of viewless eagle, round the central blaze.

Then ever shall the day that led me here
Be held in blest remembrance. I shall see,
Even at my dying hour, the glorious sun
That made Winander one wide wave of gold,
When first in transport from the mountain-top
I hailed the heavenly vision! Not a cloud,
Whose wreaths lay smiling in the lap of light,
Not one of all those sister-isles that sleep
Together, like a happy family
Of beauty and of love, but will arise
To cheer my parting spirit, and to tell
That Nature gently leads unto the grave
All who have read her heart, and kept their own
In kindred holiness.

But ere that hour
Of awful triumph, I do hope that years
Await me, when the unconscious power of joy

Creating wisdom, the bright dreams of soul
Will humanise the heart, and I shall be
More worthy to be loved by those whose love
Is highest praise :—that by the living light
That burns for ever in affection's breast,
I shall behold how fair and beautiful
A human form may be.—Oh, there are thoughts
That slumber in the soul, like sweetest sounds
Amid the harp's loose strings, till airs from Heaven
On earth, at dewy nightfall, visitant,
Awake the sleeping melody! Such thoughts,
My gentle Mary, I have owed to thee.
And if thy voice e'er melt into my soul
With a dear home-toned whisper,—if thy face
E'er brighten in the unsteady gleams of light
From our own cottage-hearth ;—O Mary! then
My overpowered spirit will recline
Upon thy inmost heart, till it become,
O sinless seraph! almost worthy thee.

Then will the earth,—that ofttimes to the eye
Of solitary lover seems o'erhung
With too severe a shade, and faintly smiles
With ineffectual beauty on his heart,—
Be clothed with everlasting joy ; like land
Of blooming faëry, or of boyhood's dreams
Ere life's first flush is o'er. Oft shall I turn
My vision from the glories of the scene
To read them in thine eyes ; and hidden grace,
That slumbers in the crimson clouds of Even,
Will reach my spirit through their varying light,
Though viewless in the sky. Wandering with thee,
A thousand beauties never seen before
Will glide with sweet surprise into my soul,
Even in those fields where each particular tree
Was looked on as a friend,—where I had been
Frequent, for years, among the lonely glens.

Nor, 'mid the quiet of reflecting bliss,
Will the faint image of the distant world
Ne'er float before us :—Cities will arise
Among the clouds that circle round the sun,
Gorgeous with tower and temple. The night-voice
Of flood and mountain to our ear will seem
Like life's loud stir :—And, as the dream dissolves,

With burning spirit we will smile to see
Only the Moon rejoicing in the sky,
And the still grandeur of the eternal hills.

Yet, though the fulness of domestic joy
Bless our united beings, and the home
Be ever happy where thy smiles are seen,
Though human voice might never touch our ear
From lip of friend or brother ;—yet, oh ! think
What pure benevolence will warm our hearts,
When with the undelaying steps of love
Through yon o'ershadowing wood we dimly see
A coming friend, far distant then believed,
And all unlooked-for. When the short distrust
Of unexpected joy no more constrains,
And the eye's welcome brings him to our arms,
With gladdened spirit he will quickly own
That true love ne'er was selfish, and that man
Ne'er knew the whole affection of his heart
Till resting on another's. If from scenes
Of noisy life he come, and in his soul
The love of Nature, like a long-past dream,
If e'er it stir, yield but a dim delight,
Oh ! we shall lead him where the genial power
Of beauty, working by the wavy green
Of hill-ascending wood, the misty gleam
Of lakes reposing in their peaceful vales,
And, lovelier than the loveliness below,
The moonlight Heaven, shall to his blood restore
An undisturbèd flow, such as he felt
Pervade his being, morning, noon, and night.
When youth's bright years passed happily away,
Among his native hills, and all he knew
Of crowded cities, was from passing tale
Of traveller, half-believed, and soon forgotten.

And fear not, Mary ! that, when winter comes,
These solitary mountains will resign
The beauty that pervades their mighty frames,
Even like a living soul. The gleams of light
Hurrying in joyful tumult o'er the cliffs,
And giving to our musings many a burst
Of sudden grandeur, even as if the eye
Of God were wandering o'er the lovely wild,

Pleased with his own creation ;—the still joy
Of cloudless skies ; and the delighted voice
Of hymning fountains,—these will leave awhile
The altered earth :—But other attributes
Of nature's heart will rule, and in the storm
We shall behold the same prevailing Power
That slumbers in the calm, and sanctify,
With adoration, the delight of love.

* * * * * *

I lift my eyes upon the radiant Moon,
That long unnoticed o'er my head has held
Her solitary walk, and as her light
Recalls my wandering soul, I start to feel
That all has been a dream. Alone I stand
Amid the silence. Onward rolls the stream
Of time, while to my ear its waters sound
With a strange rushing music. O my soul!
Whate'er betide, for aye remember thou
These mystic warnings, for they are of Heaven.

LINES

WRITTEN ON THE BANKS OF WINANDERMERE, ON RECOVERY FROM A DANGEROUS ILLNESS.

Once more, dear Lake! along thy banks I rove,
And bless thee in my heart that flows with love.
Methinks, as life's awakening embers burn,
Nature rejoices in her son's return;
And, like a parent, after absence long,
Sings from her heart of hearts a cheerful song.
Oh! that fresh breeze through all my being stole,
And made sweet music in my gladdened soul!
To me just rescued from the opening grave,
How bright the radiance of the dancing wave!
A gleam of joy, a soft endearing smile,
Plays 'mid the greenness of each sylvan isle,
And, in the bounty of affection, showers
A loving welcome o'er these blissful bowers.
Quick glides the hymning streamlet, to partake
The deep enjoyment of the happy lake;
The pebbles, sparkling through the yellow brook,
Seem to my gaze to wear a livelier look;
And little wild-flowers, that in careless health
Lay round my path in unregarded wealth,
In laughing beauty court my eyes again,
Like friends unchanged by coldness or disdain.
Now life and joy are one:—to Earth, Air, Heaven,
An undisturbèd jubilee is given;
While, happy as in dreams, I seem to fly,
Skimming the ground, or soaring through the sky,
And feel, with sudden life-pervading glee,
As if this rapture all were made for me.

And well the glory to my soul is known;
For mystic visions stamped it as my own.

While sickness lay, like ice, upon my breath,
With eye prophetic, through the shades of death
That brooded o'er me like a dreary night,
This beauteous scene I saw in living light.
No friend was near me : and a heavy gloom
Lay in deep silence o'er the lonely room ;
Even hope had fled ; and as in parting strife
My soul stood trembling on the brink of life,—
When lo ! sweet sounds, like those that now I hear,
Of stream and zephyr stole into my ear.
Far through my heart the mingled music ran,
Like tones of mercy to a dying man.
Beneath the first light of the morning's mirth,
Like new-waked beauty lay the dewy earth ;
The mighty sun I saw, as now I see,
And my soul shone with kindred majesty :
Calm smiled the Lake ; and from that smile arose
Faith, hope, and trust, oblivion of my woes :
I felt that I should live ; nor could despair
Bedim a scene so glorious, and so fair.

Now is the vision truth. Disease hath flown,
And in the midst of joy I stand alone.
The eye of God is on me : the wide sky
Is sanctified with present Deity,
And, at his bidding, Nature's aspect mild
Pours healing influence on her wasted child.
My eye now brightens with the brightening scene,
Cheered with the hues of kind restoring green ;
As with a lulling sound the fountain flows,
My tingling ear is filled with still repose ;
The summer silence, sleeping on the plain,
Sends settled quiet to my dizzy brain ;
And the moist freshness of the glittering wood
Cools with a heart-felt dew my feverish blood.

O blessed Lake ! thy sparkling waters roll
Health to my frame, and rapture to my soul.
Emblem of peace, of innocence, and love !
Sleeping in beauty given thee from above :
This earth delighting in thy gentle breast,
And the glad heavens attending on thy rest !
Can he e'er turn from virtue's quiet bowers,
All fragrant dropping with immortal flowers,

Whose inward eye, as with a magic art,
Beholds thy glory imaged in his heart?
No! he shall live, from guilt and vice afar,
As in the silent Heavens some lonely star.
A light shall be around him to defend
The holy head of Nature's bosom friend.
And if the mists of error e'er should come
To that bright sphere where virtue holds her home,
She has a charm to scare the intruder thence;
Or, powerful in her spotless innocence,
With one calm look her spirit will transform
To a fair cloud the heralds of the storm.

Nor less, Winander! to thy power I owe
Rays of delight amid the gloom of woe.
Yes! oft, when self-tormenting fancy framed
Forms of dim-fear that grief has never named;
When the whole world seemed void of mental cheer,
Nor spring nor summer in the joyless year,
Oft has thy image of upbraiding love,
Seen on a sudden through some opening grove,
Even like the tender unexpected smile
Of some dear friend I had forgot the while,
In silence said, "My son, why not partake
The peace now brooding o'er thy darling lake?
Oh! why in sullen discontent destroy
The law of Nature, Universal Joy?"

Sweet Lake! I listen to thy guardian voice:
I look abroad; and, looking, I rejoice.
My home is here; ah! never shall we part,
Till life's last pulse hath left my wasted heart.
True that another land first gave me birth,
And other lakes beheld my infant mirth:
Far from these skies dear friendships have I known,
And still in memory lives their softened tone;
Yet though the image of my earlier years
'Mid Scotland's mountains dim my eyes with tears,
And the heart's day-dreams oft will lingering dwell
On that wild region which she loves so well,—
Think not, sweet Lake! before my years are told
My love for thee and thine can e'er grow cold:
For here hath Hope fixed her last earthly bound,
And where Hope rests in peace, is hallowed ground.

And oh! if e'er that happy time shall come,
When she I love sits smiling in my home,
And, oft as chance may bid us meet or part,
Speaks the soft word that slides into the heart,
Then fair as now thou art, yea! passing fair,
Thy scarce-seen waters melting into air,
Far lovelier gleams will dance upon thy breast,
And thine isles bend their trees in deeper rest.
Then will my joy-enlightened soul descry
All that is beautiful on land or sky;
For, when the heart is calm with pure delight,
Revels the soul 'mid many a glorious sight.
The earth then kindles with a vernal grace,
Glad as the laugh upon an infant-face:
The sun himself is clothed with vaster light,
And showers of gentler sadness bathe the night.

Dreams of delight! while thus I fondly weave
Your fairy-folds, oh! can ye e'er deceive?
Are ye in vain to cheated mortals given,
Lovely impostors in the garb of Heaven?
Fears, hopes, doubts, wishes, hush my pensive shell,
Fount of them all, dear Lake! farewell! farewell!

PICTURE OF A BLIND MAN.

Why sits so long beside yon cottage-door
That aged man with tresses thin and hoar?
Fixed are his eyes in one continued gaze,
Nor seem to feel the sun's meridian blaze;
Yet are the orbs with youth-like colours bright,
As o'er the iris falls the trembling light.
Changeless his mien; not even one flitting trace
Of spirit wanders o'er his furrowed face;
No feeling moves his venerable head:
—He sitteth there—an emblem of the dead!
The staff of age lies near him on the seat,
His faithful dog is slumbering at his feet,
And yon fair child, who steals an hour for play
While thus her father rests upon his way,
Her sport will leave, nor cast one look behind,
Soon as she hears his voice,—for he is blind!

List! as in tones through deep affection mild
He speaks by name to the delighted child!
Then, bending mute in dreams of painful bliss
Breathes o'er her neck a father's tenderest kiss,
And with light hand upon her forehead fair
Smooths the stray ringlets of her silky hair!
A beauteous phantom rises through the night
For ever brooding o'er his darkened sight,
So clearly imaged both in form and limb,
He scarce remembers that his eyes are dim,
But thinks he sees in truth the vernal wreath
His gentle infant wove, that it might breathe
A sweet restoring fragrance through his breast,
Chosen from the wild-flowers that he loves the best.
In that sweet trance he sees the sparkling glee
That sanctifies the face of infancy;

The dimpled cheek where playful fondness lies,
And the blue softness of her smiling eyes;
The spirit's temple unprofaned by tears,
Where God's unclouded loveliness appears;
Those gleams of soul to every feature given,
When youth walks guiltless by the light of heaven!

And oh! what pleasures through his spirit burn,
When to the gate his homeward steps return;
When fancy's eye the curling smoke surveys,
And his own hearth is gaily heard to blaze!
How beams his sightless visage! when the press
Of Love's known hand, with cheerful tenderness,
Falls on his arm, and leads with guardian care
His helpless footsteps to the accustomed chair;
When the dear voice he joyed from youth to hear
With kind inquiry comes unto his ear,
And tremulous tells how lovely still must be
Those fading beauties that he ne'er must see!

Though ne'er by him his cottage-home be seen,
Where to the wild brook slopes the daisied green;
Though the bee, slowly borne on laden wing,
To him be known but by its murmuring;
And the long leaf that trembles in the breeze
Be all that tells him of his native trees;
Yet dear to him each viewless object round
Familiar to his soul from touch or sound.
The stream, 'mid banks of osier winding near,
Lulls his calm spirit through the listening ear:
Deeply his soul enjoys the loving strife
When the warm summer air is filled with life;
And as his limbs in quiet dreams are laid,
Blest is the oak's contemporary shade.

Happy old Man! no vain regrets intrude
On the still hour of sightless solitude.
Though deepest shades o'er outward Nature roll,
Her cloudless beauty lives within thy soul.
—Oft to yon rising mount thy steps ascend,
As to the spot where dwelt a former friend;
From whose green summit thou couldst once behold
Mountains far-off in dim confusion rolled,
Lakes of blue mist, where gleamed the whitening sail,
And many a woodland interposing vale.

Thou seest them still: and oh! how soft a shade
Does memory breathe o'er mountain, wood, and glade!
Each craggy pass, where oft in sportive scorn
Had sprung thy limbs in life's exulting morn;
Each misty cataract, and torrent-flood,
Where thou a silent angler oft hast stood;
Each sheltered creek where through the roughest day
Floated thy bark without the anchor's stay;
Each nameless field by nameless thought endeared;
Each little hedgerow that thy childhood reared,
That seems unaltered yet in form and size,
Though fled the clouds of fifty summer skies,
Rise on thy soul,—on high devotion springs
Through Nature's beauty borne on Fancy's wings,
And while the blissful vision floats around,
Of loveliest form, fair hue, and melting sound,
Thou carest not, though blindness may not roam,—
For Heaven's own glory smiles around thy home.

PEACE AND INNOCENCE.

The lingering lustre of a vernal day
From the dim landscape slowly steals away ;
One lovely hour !—and then the stars of Even
Will sparkling hail the apparent Queen of Heaven ;
For the tired Sun, now softly sinking down,
To his fair daughter leaves his silent throne.
Almost could I believe with life imbued,
And hushed in dreams, this gentle solitude.
Look where I may, a tranquillising soul
Breathes forth a life-like pleasure o'er the whole.
The shadows settling on the mountain's breast
Recline, as conscious of the hour of rest ;
Steadfast as objects in a peaceful dream;
The sleepy trees are bending o'er the stream ;
The stream, half veiled in snowy vapour, flows
With sound like silence, motion like repose,
My heart obeys the power of earth and sky,
And 'mid the quiet slumbers quietly !

A wreath of smoke, that feels no breath of air,
Melts amid yon fair clouds, itself as fair,
And seems to link in beauteousness and love
That earthly cottage to the domes above.
There my heart rests,—as if by magic bound :
Blessings be on that plat of orchard-ground !
Wreathed round the dwelling like a fairy ring,
Its green leaves lost in richest blossoming.
Within that ring no creature seems alive ;
The bees have ceased to hum around the hive ;
On the tall ash the rooks have roosted long,
And the fond dove hath cooed his latest song :
Now, shrouded close beneath the holly-bush,
Sits on her low-built nest the sleeping thrush.

All do not sleep: behold a spotless lamb
Looks bleating round, as if it sought its dam.
Its restless motion and its piteous moan
Tell that it fears all night to rest alone,
Though heaven's most gracious dew descends in peace
Softly as snow-flakes on its radiant fleece.
That mournful bleat hath touched the watchful ear
Of one to whom the little lamb is dear,
As innocent and lovely as itself!
See where with springs she comes, the smiling elf!
Well does the lamb her infant guardian know:
Joy brightening dances o'er her breast of snow,
And light as flying leaf, with sudden glide,
Fondly she presses to the maiden's side.
With kindness quieting its late alarms,
The sweet child folds it in her nursing arms;
And calling it by every gentle name
That happy innocence through love can frame;
With tenderest kisses lavished on its head,
Conducts it frisking to its sheltered bed.

Kind-hearted infant! be thy slumbers bland!
Dream that thy sportive lambkin licks thy hand,
Or, wearied out by races short and fleet,
Basks in the sunshine, resting on thy feet;
That waking from repose, unbroken, deep,
Thou scarce shalt know that thou hast been asleep!
With eyelids trembling through thy golden hair,
I hear thee lisping low thy nightly prayer.
O sweetest voice! what beauty breathes therein!
Ne'er hath its music been impaired by sin.
In all its depths my soul shall carry hence
The air serene born of thy innocence.
To me most awful is thy hour of rest,
For little children sleep in Jesus' breast!

LOUGHRIG TARN.

Thou guardian Naiad of this little Lake,
Whose banks in unprofanèd Nature sleep,
(And that in waters lone and beautiful
Dwell spirits radiant as the homes they love,
Have poets still believed), O surely blest
Beyond all genii or of wood or wave,
Or sylphs that in the shooting sunbeams dwell,
Art thou! yea, happier even than summer-cloud
Beloved by air and sky, and floating slow
O'er the still bosom of upholding heaven.

Beauteous as blest, O Naiad, thou must be!
For, since thy birth, have all delightful things,
Of form and hue, of silence and of sound,
Circled thy spirit, as the crowding stars
Shine round the placid Moon. Lov'st thou to sink
Into thy cell of sleep? The water parts
With dimpling smiles around thee, and below,
The unsunned verdure, soft as cygnet's down,
Meets thy descending feet without a sound.
Lov'st thou to sport upon the watery gleam?
Lucid as air around thy head it lies
Bathing thy sable locks in pearly light,
While, all around, the water-lilies strive
To shower their blossoms o'er the virgin queen.
Or doth the shore allure thee?—well it may:
How soft these fields of pastoral beauty melt
In the clear water! neither sand nor stone
Bars herb or wild-flower from the dewy sound,
Like Spring's own voice now rippling round the Tarn.
There oft thou liest 'mid the echoing bleat
Of lambs, that race amid the sunny gleams;
Or bee's wide murmur as it fills the broom
That yellows round thy bed. O gentle glades,
Amid the tremulous verdure of the woods,

In steadfast smiles of more essential light,
Lying like azure streaks of placid sky
Amid the moving clouds, the Naiad loves
Your glimmering alleys, and your rustling bowers;
For there, in peace reclined, her half-closed eye
Through the long vista sees her darling Lake,
Even like herself, diffused in fair repose.

Not undelightful to the quiet breast
Such solitary dreams as now have filled
My busy fancy; dreams that rise in peace,
And thither lead, partaking in their flight
Of human interests and earthly joys.
Imagination fondly leans on truth,
And sober scenes of dim reality
To her seem lovely as the western sky,
To the rapt Persian worshipping the sun.
Methinks this little lake, to whom my heart
Assigned a guardian spirit, renders back
To me, in tenderest gleams of gratitude,
Profounder beauty to reward my hymn.

Long hast thou been a darling haunt of mine,
And still warm blessings gushed into my heart,
Meeting or parting with thy smiles of peace.
But now, thy mild and gentle character,
More deeply felt than ever, seems to blend
Its essence pure with mine, like some sweet tune
Oft heard before with pleasure, but at last,
In one high moment of inspirèd bliss,
Borne through the spirit like an angel's song.

This is the solitude that reason loves!
Even he who yearns for human sympathies,
And hears a music in the breath of man,
Dearer than voice of mountain or of flood,
Might live a hermit here, and mark the sun
Rising or setting 'mid the beauteous calm,
Devoutly blending in his happy soul
Thoughts both of earth and heaven!—Yon mountain-side,
Rejoicing in its clustering cottages,
Appears to me a paradise preserved
From guilt by Nature's hand, and every wreath
Of smoke, that from these hamlets mounts to heaven,

In its straight silence holy as a spire
Reared o'er the house of God.

Thy sanctity
Time yet hath reverenced ; and I deeply feel
That innocence her shrine shall here preserve
For ever.—The wild vale that lies beyond,
Circled by mountains trod but by the feet
Of venturous shepherd, from all visitants,
Save the free tempests and the fowls of heaven,
Guards thee ;—and wooded knolls fantastical
Seclude thy image from the gentler dale,
That by the Brathay's often-varied voice
Cheered as it winds along, in beauty fades
'Mid the green banks of joyful Windermere !

O gentlest Lake ! from all unhallowed things
By grandeur guarded in thy loveliness,
Ne'er may thy poet with unwelcome feet
Press thy soft moss embathed in flowery dies,
And shadowed in thy stillness like the heavens.
May innocence for ever lead me here,
To form amid the silence high resolves
For future life ; resolves that, born in peace,
Shall live 'mid tumult, and though haply mild
As infants in their play, when brought to bear
On the world's business, shall assert their power
And majesty—and lead me boldly on,
Like giants conquering in a noble cause.

This is a holy faith, and full of cheer
To all who worship Nature, that the hours,
Passed tranquilly with her, fade not away
For ever like the clouds, but in the soul
Possess a secret silent dwelling-place,
Where with a smiling visage memory sits,
And startles oft the virtuous, with a show
Of unsuspected treasures. Yea, sweet Lake !
Oft hast thou borne into my grateful heart
Thy lovely presence, with a thousand dreams
Dancing and brightening o'er thy sunny wave,
Though many a dreary mile of mist and snow
Between us interposed. And even now,

When yon bright star hath risen to warn me home,
I bid thee farewell in the certain hope,
That thou, this night, wilt o'er my sleeping eyes
Shed cheering visions, and with freshest joy
Make me salute the dawn. Nor may the hymn
Now sung by me unto thy listening woods,
Be wholly vain,—but haply it may yield
A gentle pleasure to some gentle heart,
Who blessing, at its close, the unknown bard,
May, for his sake, upon thy quiet banks
Frame visions of his own, and other songs
More beautiful, to Nature and to Thee!

WAKING DREAMS.

A FRAGMENT.

O THAT my soul might breathe one touching strain,
By the gracious Muses destined not to die,
But murmuring oft, o'er valley, hill, and plain,
Enrolled 'mid Scotia's native minstrelsy!
O more than blest the spirit of thy sky,
Its stormy clouds, its depth of slumb'rous blue,
And gladly would I close my filial eye
In the calm fondness of a last adieu,
Could I but frame one lay to Thee and nature true.

In olden time, thy glens were heard to roll
The voice of song—deep, solemn, and divine,
That claimed dominion o'er the happy soul,
Most spirit-like, as from a secret shrine.
Oft as the dewy Evening star 'gan shine,
Th' inspirèd shepherd sought some lonely cave,
Nor, singing there, beheld its dim decline,
Nor heard, entranced, the Piny forest rave,
Nor saw the glorious sun descending to the wave.

The solitary soul, in such recess,
An air-swept lyre, the breath of heaven obeyed;
And still his hymns were hymns of tenderness,
Of blissful loves, or earthly bliss decayed.
The Poet died; and in the dust was laid!
The green earth hides him in its smiling rest!
For, haply now, the churchyard is a glade,
Where by the feet of wandering wild-deer prest,
The flowers in morning-dew are glistening o'er his breast.

Yet Wisdom weeps not o'er such Poet's fate,
Though seeming robbed of his eternal fame

The soul whom heaven and genius consecrate,
In Nature's memory lives without a name.
The beauty of the wild-flower is the same
To him who loves it for that beauty's sake,
And for that sake alone! fair is the flame
Of nameless stars that suddenly awake,
And the earth laughs with light of many a nameless lake.

Yet looking now o'er this delightful earth,
A clinging spirit of immortal love
Is blending with the sweet land of my birth!
As if on field, lake, mountain, glen, and grove,
When I am dead, some part of me might move
Some faint memorial of my mortal day
Sleeping like moonlight the old woods above!
My soul in sorrow turneth from decay;
O might it live on earth, embalmed in heavenly lay!

Have I not e'er since reason's dawning light
Thee, Scotland, worshippèd with praise and prayer!
Lovely by day, magnificent by night!
Where is the cloud-wrapt hill, the valley fair,
If mortal feet might climb or wander there,
Whose echo ne'er hath answered to my voice?
The unsunned-glen, the breathless forest, where,
That hath not heard my raptured soul rejoice
In Nature's hush divine, her spirit-humbling noise?

I, like an eagle, o'er the mountain cliff,
Have soared in dreams as lofty and as lone;
On air-woven lakes, I from my fairy skiff
The anchor of my solitude have thrown.
Methinks, that but to me some spots are known!
—Give answer from afar, thou once-seen glen,
Thou shadowy, silent world of mist and stone,
Thy desert shapes like images of men,
In mockery of man's voice, the small pipe of the wren!

Or answer thou! with music and with light,
Thou vale of vales! that to the Evening star
My soul did consecrate one summer night,
When loth that such sweet darkness should debar
My soul from loveliness it could not mar,
I asked that gentle orb to be the guide
Of one, who from his way had wandered far,

And soon she led me where my heart espied
Valley and lakelet bright, by midnight glorified!

Yet to the impulse of such lifeless things
I ne'er so far surrendered up my dreams,
As not to feel my spirit's folded wings,
Like a bird basking in life's sunny gleams.
Yea! whether musing by the moorland streams,
Or in the arms of mountain-silence bound,
For human eyes far off the loveliest gleams
Came smiling o'er the loveliness around,
Yea! even the trickling dew was like a human sound.

For other friendships have I learned to cherish,
Than with the sky, the ocean, and the earth;
Lovely they are and pure—but they must perish,
For perishing the fount that gave them birth.
But on the human face immortal mirth,
Or calm, than mirth far lovelier, may endure;
Nor shall that heart e'er ache in spiritual dearth,
Nor ever pine for pleasures, high and pure,
Linked to its brother-man, in brotherhood secure.

Among the hills a hundred homes have I;
My table in the wilderness is spread;
In those lone spots, a human smile can buy
Plain fare, kind welcome, and a rushy bed.
O dead to Christian love! to nature dead,
Who, when some cottage at the close of day
Hath o'er his soul its cheerful dimness shed,
Feels not that God was with him on his way,
Nor with these simple folks devoutly kneels to pray.

What means the silent lake, the cataract's roar,
The snow-like moonshine on the summer-hill,
Old ocean thundering o'er his solemn shore,
Or the faint hymning of the infant rill?
Say, can such things th' immortal spirit fill
With perfect voice or silence like their own?
No, in its trance the soul is longing still
For other music; by one breath o'erthrown,
The fancy's pageant sinks with its aërial throne.

Where is the radiance, touching as the hue,
Breathed by delight o'er childhood's laughing cheek?

What glimpse of ether, beauteous as the dew
In eyes whose gazing silence seems to speak
Of something in our souls more hushed and meek
Than aught that sleeps on sky, earth, sea, or air!
Then turn from such vain images, and seek
True beauty shrined amid yon golden hair;
Behold yon snow-white brow—her throne, her heaven
is there.

Then, as thou wanderest through thy native vales
Like wild-flowers spread to cheer thee on thy way
(Wild-flowers all dancing in the sunny gales),
Sweet sinless children, smiling in their play,
Will chain thy footsteps oft with fond delay!
Thou see'st, as in some mere's unclouded glow,
The pure bright morn of being's vernal day,
And, gazing on the heaven that lies below,
Feel'st not to draw thy breath amid this world of woe.

If such the temper of thy heart, what joy
Is rising there, when on some radiant steep
Thou see'st the solitary shepherd-boy
(While his white flock amid the sunshine sleep),
Through all the long day's stillness, lone and deep,
Sitting, unwearied as the gladsome brook
That sings along with many a frolic leap,
While earnestly his unuplifted look
Lives on the yellow page of some old fairy book.

Alone thou need'st not be, though all around
Thy dreaming soul a mountainous region lie
Spread like a sea that heaves without a sound,
Chained in tumultuous silence 'mid the sky.
Cloud-like ascends before thine inward eye
The wreathèd smoke, from many a palm-tree grove,
'Mid the still desert mounting silently,
Straight up to heaven! and, as it fades above,
Looks like some guardian Power that eyes the earth
with love.

Blessings be on yon hill-side cottages!
A starry group rejoicing in the mist!
Blest be the leaves, fruit, branches of the trees,
And the thatched roof they shelter ever blest.

Long hath the light of knowledge and of rest
Thence banished sin, and suffering there beguiled ;
That loving angel, Innocence, hath kissed
Frequent the cheek of every rosy child,
And leads them dancing on along the pathless wild.

Ah me ! when wandering at sweet eventide,
'Mid the fair vales of England, as they lay,
Of their own beauty touched with stately pride,
Encircled with the diadem of May !
Here palace-domes, there dwellings light and gay,
In groves embosomed, or with rosy showers,
Bride-like adorned in beautiful array,
Where, charmed by fragrance, the delighted Hours,
Seemed, as the sun went down, still lingering 'mid the flowers.

How hath that gorgeous vision in the air
(Light, music, fragrance, cottage, tower, and dome),
Melted to nothing ! Thou art smiling there,
Most sweetly smiling through the dewy gloom,
Just as Eve's star and crescent-moon illume
Heaven's arch, that folds thee in the hush of night,
Wild Hamlet ! In thy quiet's inner room
The wanderer sits, and wonders in delight
On what kind angel's wing hath been his homeward flight.

* * * * * * .

MARY.

THREE days before my Mary's death,
We walked by Grassmere shore;
"Sweet Lake!" she said with faltering breath,
"I ne'er shall see thee more!"

Then turning round her languid head,
She looked me in the face,
And whispered, "When thy friend is dead,
Remember this lone place."

Vainly I struggled at a smile,
That did my fears betray;
It seemed that on our darling isle
Foreboding darkness lay.

My Mary's words were words of truth;
None now behold the Maid;
Amid the tears of age and youth,
She in her grave was laid.

Long days, long nights, I ween, were past
Ere ceased her funeral knell;
But to the spot I went at last
Where she had breathed "farewell!"

Methought, I saw the phantom stand
Beside the peaceful wave;
I felt the pressure of her hand—
Then looked towards her grave.

Fair, fair beneath the evening sky
The quiet churchyard lay:
The tall pine-grove most solemnly
Hung mute above her clay.

Dearly she loved their arching spread,
Their music wild and sweet,
And, as she wished on her deathbed,
Was buried at their feet.

Around her grave a beauteous fence
Of wild-flowers shed their breath,
Smiling like infant innocence
Within the gloom of death.

Such flowers from bank of mountain brook
At eve we used to bring,
When every little mossy nook
Betrayed returning Spring.

Oft had I fixed the simple wreath
Upon her virgin breast ;
But now such flowers as formed it, breathe
Around her bed of rest.

Yet all within my silent soul,
As the hushed air was calm ;
The natural tears that slowly stole,
Assuaged my grief like balm.

The air that seemed so thick and dull
For months unto my eye ;
Ah me ! how bright and beautiful
It floated on the sky !

A trance of high and solemn bliss
From purest ether came ;
'Mid such a heavenly scene as this,
Death is an empty name !

The memory of the past returned
Like music to my heart,—
It seemed that causelessly I mourned,
When we were told to part.

"God's mercy," to myself I said,
"To both our souls is given—
To me, sojourning on earth's shade,
To her—a Saint in Heaven !"

SOLITUDE.

O VALE of visionary rest!
—Hushed as the grave it lies
With heaving banks of tenderest green
Yet brightly, happily serene,
As cloud-vale of the sleepy west
Reposing on the skies.
Its reigning spirit may not vary—
What change can seasons bring
Unto so sweet, so calm a spot,
Where every loud and restless thing
Is like a far-off dream forgot?
Mild, gentle, mournful, solitary,
As if it aye were spring,
And Nature loved to witness here
The still joys of the infant year,
'Mid flowers and music wandering glad,
For ever happy, yet for ever sad.
This little world how still and lone
With that horizon of its own!
And, when in silence falls the night,
With its own moon how purely bright!
No shepherd's cot is here—no shieling
Its verdant roof through trees revealing—
No branchy covert like a nest,
Where the weary woodmen rest,
And their jocund carols sing
O'er the fallen forest-king.
Inviolate by human hand
The fragrant white-stemmed birch-trees stand,
With many a green and sunny glade
'Mid their embowering murmurs made
By gradual soft decay—
Where stealing to that little lawn
From secret haunt and half-afraid,
The doe, in mute affection gay,

At close of eve leads forth her fawn
Amid the flowers to play.
And in that dell's soft bosom, lo!
Where smileth up a cheerful glow
Of water pure as air,
A tarn by two small streamlets spread
In beauty o'er its waveless bed,
Reflecting in that heaven so still
The birch-grove mid-way up the hill,
And summits green and bare.

How lone! beneath its veil of dew
That morning's rosy fingers drew,
Seldom shepherd's foot hath prest
One primrose in its sunny rest.
The sheep at distance from the spring
May here her lambkins chance to bring,
Sporting with their shadows airy,
Each like tiny Water-fairy
Imaged in the lucid lake!
The hive-bee here doth sometimes make
Music, whose sweet murmurings tell
Of his sheltered straw-roofed cell
Standing 'mid some garden gay,
Near a cottage far away.
By the lake-side, on a stone
Stands the heron all alone,
Still as any lifeless thing!
Slowly moves his laggard wing,
And cloud-like floating with the gale
Leaves at last the quiet vale.

THE SISTERS.

Sweet Creature ! issuing like a dream
So softly from that wood !
—She glideth on a sunny gleam—
In youth and innocence so bright,
She lendeth lustre to day-light
And life to solitude !
O'er all her face a radiance fair
That seemeth to be native there !
No transient smile, no burst of joy
Which time or sorrow may destroy,
A soul-breathed calm that ne'er may cease !
The spirit of eternal peace !
The sunshine may forsake the sky,
But the blue depths of ether lie
In steadfast meek serenity.
Onward she walks—with that pure face
Shedding around its gladdening grace—
Those cloudless eyes of tenderest blue
Sparkling through a tearlike dew—
That golden hair that floats in air
Fine as the glittering gossamer—
That motion dancing o'er the earth
Without an aim—in very mirth—
That lark-like song whose strengthening measure
Is soaring through the air of pleasure—
—Is she not like the innocent Morn ?
When from the slow-unfolding arms
Of Night, she starts in all her charms,
And o'er the glorious earth is borne,
With orient pearls beneath her feet,—
All round her, music warbling sweet,
And o'er her head the fulgent skies
In the fresh light of Paradise.

Lo ! Sadness by the side of Joy !
—With raven tresses on her brow
Braided o'er that glimpse of snow—
O'er her bosom stray locks spread
As if by grief dishevellèd—
Unsparkling eyes where smiles appear
More mournful far than many a tear—
Voice most gentle, sad, and slow,
Whose happiest tones still breathe of woe—
As in our ancient Scottish airs
Even joy the sound of sorrow wears—
Motion like a cloud that goes
From deep to more profound repose—
Seems she not in pensive light
Image of the falling night ?
—Still survive faint gleams of day,
But all sinking to decay—
There is almost mirth and gladness,
Tempered soft with peace and sadness—
Sound comes from the stream and hill,
But the darkening world is still—
The heavens above are bright and holy,
Most beautiful—most melancholy—
And gazing with suspended breath,
We dream of grief—decay—and death !

THE FAREWELL AND RETURN.

I WENT where two dear friends did dwell,
Husband and Wife—to bid farewell,
Before I left my peaceful home,
Alone through distant lands to roam.
I found them by their sparkling hearth,
In perfect love and inward mirth—
Through virtue happy in themselves,
And sporting with four beauteous Elves,
Who, like the tender flowers of Spring
Moved by the zephyr's lightest wing,
Danced here and there in playful guise,
With sunny heads and laughing eyes,
With song of joy and wanton shout—
A happy—restless—maddening rout!

They look unto the opening door,
And all their noisy mirth is o'er!
To graveness sink their wanton wiles
And blushes hide their struggling smiles.
Quick to their mother's lap they run,
As trembling to be looked upon—
There half-delighted—half-afraid,
They hide, then slowly raise the head—
And venture thus to look at me
With sweet restraint and bashful glee,
Till the dear child I love the best
With downcast look steals from the rest,
And with an infant's blessed art
Twines her white arms around my heart.

And now the stir—the noise revive!
The little cottage seems alive,
As if a new-awakened soul
Like light were gladdening through the whole.

The happy parents smile to see
Their Mary lisping on my knee
With bolder look and freer tone,
As if she felt that seat her own.
While oft her gamesome brothers tried
To win from my protecting side
The little truant maid away,
By taunting jibe and novel play.
But vain both jibe and play to move
An infant's heart when touched with love!

Soon evening brings the hour of rest—
And Mary on my loving breast
Hath fallen asleep! so not to wake
The blessed babe, I gently take
Her guiltless bosom soft and fair,
Unto her bed—and breathe a prayer
That all her future life be spent
Happy as she is innocent!
Near me her joyful parents stand,
Bless me by name and press my hand—
Their mingling tones my spirit meet,
Though always kind, now doubly sweet—
A golden chain in concord mild
Links closely parents, friend, and child.

Years past along—and lo! once more
I stand beside that cottage-door;—
The hour in which I went away
Seems but the eve of yesterday.
Motionless there I linger long,
O'erpowered with a tumultuous throng
Of memories, fancies, hopes, and fears,
Sinkings of heart, sighs, smiles, and tears.
No cause had I for mournful thought,
Yet in my beating heart there wrought
A dread of something undefined!
While like the hollow midnight wind,
A voice fell sullen on my ear,
"Think not to find your Mary here!"

A dreary stillness reigned around
Deep as the hush of burial-ground,
As if all life were banished thence
By breath of noisome pestilence.

Not so—I met a ghastly man
With haggard eyes and visage wan ;
In his dim looks so charged with woe
My dearest friend I scarce could know.
One moment's pause—then did he fall
Upon my neck—and told me all !
That she my darling girl was dead,
And by his own hands newly laid
Spotless within her spotless shroud—
His voice here died—he wept aloud.

Vainly his tortured soul I cheered—
When lo ! his wretched wife appeared,
Unlike that wife when last we parted,
Then deeply blest—now broken-hearted.
She gazed on me with eyeballs wild,
And shrieked the name of her dead child ;
And with convulsive sobs opprest
She fainted on her husband's breast !
The memory of that happy night
Came o'er her like a sudden blight !
Those gentle looks—those melting smiles—
These happy shouts—those wanton wiles—
That dreaming face upon its bed—
—Now lying there, pale, cold, and dead !

Ah me ! beneath a beauteous sky
The Fairy-land of peace doth lie,
Through which united spirits stray
Companions on the destined way
That leads to everlasting life !
Yet oft that darkening sky is rife
With thunder-bearing clouds ! they fade—
And heaven's blue depths again displayed
Seem steeped in quiet more profound !
—I walked unto the burial-ground,
Where that delightful child doth rest—
There both her parents deeply blest !
Methought I saw their souls rejoice,
Listening in heaven that Seraph's voice.

LINES

WRITTEN AT A LITTLE WELL BY THE ROADSIDE, LANGDALE.

Thou lonely spring of waters undefiled!
Silently slumbering in thy mossy cell,
Yea, moveless as the hillock's verdant side
From which thou hadst thy birth, I bless thy gleam
Of clearest coldness, with as deep-felt joy
As pilgrim kneeling at his far-sought shrine;
And as I bow to bathe my freshened heart
In thy restoring radiance, from my lips
A breathing prayer sheds o'er thy glassy sleep
A gentle tremor!

Nor must I forget
A benison for the departed soul
Of him who, many a year ago, first shaped
This little Font,—imprisoning the spring
Not wishing to be free, with smooth slate-stone,
Now in the beauteous colouring of age
Scarcely distinguished from the natural rock.
In blessèd hour the solitary man
Laid the first stone,—and in his native vale
It serves him for a peaceful monument,
'Mid the hill silence.

Renovated life
Now flows through all my veins:—old dreams revive;
And while an airy pleasure in my brain
Dances unbidden, I have time to gaze,
Even with a happy lover's kindest looks,
On Thee, delicious Fountain!

Thou dost shed
(Though sultry stillness fill the summer air
And parch the yellow hills), all round thy cave,
A smile of beauty lovely as the Spring

Breathes with his April showers. The narrow lane
On either hand ridged with low shelving rocks,
That from the roadside gently lead the eye
Up to thy bed,—Ah me! how rich a green,
Still brightening, wantons o'er its moistened grass!
With what a sweet sensation doth my gaze,
Now that my thirsty soul is gratified,
Live on the little cell! The water there,
Variously dappled by the wreathèd sand
That sleeps below in many an antic shape,
Like the mild plumage of the pheasant-hen
Soothes the beholder's eye. The ceaseless drip
From the moss-fretted roof, by Nature's hand
Vaulted most beautiful, even like a pulse
Tells of the living principle within,—
A pulse but seldom heard amid the wild.

Yea, seldom heard: there is but one lone cot
Beyond this well:—it is inhabited
By an old shepherd during summer months,
And haply he may drink of the pure spring,
To Langdale Chapel on the Sabbath-morn
Going to pray,—or as he home returns
At silent eve: or traveller such as I,
Following his fancies o'er these lonely hills,
Thankfully here may slake his burning thirst
Once in a season. Other visitants
It hath not; save perchance the mountain-crow,
When ice hath locked the rills, or wandering colt
Leaving its pasture for the shady lane.

Methinks, in such a solitary cave,
The fairy forms belated peasant sees,
Oft nightly dancing in a glittering ring
On the smooth mountain-sward, might here retire
To lead their noontide revels, or to bathe
Their tiny limbs in this transparent well.
A fitter spot there is not: flowers are here
Of loveliest colours and of sweetest smell,
Native to these our hills, and ever seen
A fairest family by the happy side
Of their own parent spring;—and others too,
Of foreign birth, the cultured garden's joy,
Planted by that old shepherd in his mirth,
Here smile like strangers in a novel scene.

Lo! a tall rose-tree with its clustering bloom,
Brightening the mossy wall on which it leans
Its arching beauty, to my gladsome heart
Seems, with its smiles of lonely loveliness,
Like some fair virgin at the humble door
Of her dear mountain-cot, standing to greet
The way-bewildered traveller.

But my soul
Long-pleased to linger by this silent cave,
Nursing its wild and playful fantasies,
Pants for a loftier pleasure,—and forsakes,
Though surely with no cold ingratitude,
The flowers and verdure round the sparkling well.

A voice calls on me from the mountain-depths,
And it must be obeyed: Yon ledge of rocks,
Like a wild staircase over Hardknot's brow,
Is ready for my footsteps, and even now,
Wastwater blackens far beneath my feet,
She, the storm-loving lake.

Sweet Fount!—Farewell!

THE PAST.

How wild and dim this Life appears!
One long, deep, heavy sigh!
When o'er our eyes, half-closed in tears,
The images of former years
Are faintly glimmering by!
And still forgotten while they go.
As on the sea-beach wave on wave
Dissolves at once in snow.
Upon the blue and silent sky
The amber clouds one moment lie,
And like a dream are gone!
Though beautiful the moonbeams play
On the lake's bosom bright as they,
And the soul intensely loves their stay,
Soon as the radiance melts away
We scarce believe it shone!
Heaven-airs amid the harp-strings dwell,
And we wish they ne'er may fade—
They cease! and the soul is a silent cell,
Where music never played.
Dream follows dream through the long night-hours,
Each lovelier than the last—
But ere the breath of morning-flowers,
That gorgeous world flies past.
And many a sweet angelic cheek,
Whose smiles of love and kindness speak,
Glides by us on this earth—
While in a day we cannot tell
Where shone the face we loved so well
In sadness or in mirth.

PEACE.

I COULD believe that sorrow ne'er sojourned
Within the circle of these sunny hills;
That this small lake, beneath the morning light,
Now lying so serenely beautiful,
Ne'er felt one passing storm, but on its breast
Retained for aye the silent imagery
Of those untroubled heavens.

How still yon isle,
Scarcely distinguished from its glimmering shadow
In the water pure as air! Yon little flock
How snow-white! lying on the pastoral mount,
Basking in the sunshine. That lone fisherman,
Who draws his net so slowly to the shore,
How calm an image of secluded life!
While the boat moving with its twinkling oars,
On its short voyage to yon verdant point
Fringed with wild birch-wood, leaves a shining track
Connecting by a pure and silvery line
The quiet of both shores.

So deep the calm
I hear the solitary stock-dove's voice
Moaning across the lake, from the dark bosom
Of yon old pine-grove. Hark, the village clock
Tolls soberly! And, 'mid the tufted elms,
Reveals the spire still pointing up to heaven.
I travel on unto the noisy city,
And on this sunny bank mine hour of rest
Stream-like has murmured by—yet shall the music
Oft rise again—the lake, hills, wood, and grove,
And that calm House of God. Sweet Vale, Farewell!

THE DESOLATE VILLAGE.

FIRST DREAM.

SWEET Village! on thy pastoral hill
Arrayed in sunlight sad and still,
As if beneath the harvest-moon,
Thy noiseless homes were sleeping!
It is the merry month of June,
And creatures all of air and earth
Should now their holiday of mirth
With dance and song be keeping.
But, loveliest village! silent thou,
As cloud wreathed o'er the morning's brow,
When light is faintly breaking,
And midnight's voice afar is lost,
Like the wailing of a wearied ghost,
The shades of earth forsaking.
'Tis not the Day to Scotia dear,
A summer Sabbath mild and clear;
Yet from her solemn burial-ground
The small kirk-steeple looks around,
Enshrouded in a calm
Profound as fills the house of prayer,
E'er from the band of virgins fair
Exhales the choral psalm.
A sight so steeped in perfect rest
Is slumbering not on nature's breast
In the smiles of earthly day.
'Tis a picture floating down the sky,
By fancy framed in years gone by,
And mellowing in decay.
That thought is gone!—the village still
With deepening quiet crowns the hill,
Its low green roofs are there:
In soft material beauty beaming,
As in the silent hour of dreaming
They hung embowered in air.

Is this the Day when to the mountains
The happy shepherds go,
And bathe in sparkling pools and fountains
Their flocks made white as snow?
Hath gentle girl and gamesome boy,
With meek-eyed mirth or shouting joy,
Gone tripping up the brae,
Till far behind their Town doth stand,
Like an image in sweet Fairy-land,
When the Elves have flown away?
—O sure if aught of human breath
Within these walls remain,
Thus deepening in the hush of death,
'Tis but some melancholy crone,
Who sits with solemn eyes
Beside the cradle all alone,
And lulls the infant with a strain
Of Scotia's ancient melodies.

What if these homes be filled with life?
'Tis the sultry month of June,
And when the cloudless sun rides high
Above the glittering air of noon,
All nature sinks opprest,—
And labour shuts his weary eye
In the mid-day hour of rest.
Yet let the soul think what it will,
Most dirge-like mourns that moorland rill:
How different once its flow,
When with a dreamy motion gliding
'Mid its green fields in love abiding,
Or leaping o'er the mossy linn,
And sporting with its own wild din,
Seemed water changed to snow.
Beauty lies spread before my sight,
But grief-like shadows dim its light,
And all the scene appears
Like a churchyard when a friend is dying,
In more than earthly stillness lying,
And glimmering through our tears.

Sweet Woodburn! like a cloud that name
Comes floating o'er my soul.
Although thy beauty still survive,
One look hath changed the whole.

The gayest village of the gay
Beside thy own sweet river,
Wert thou on week or Sabbath day!
So bathed in the blue light of joy,
As if no trouble could destroy
Peace doomed to last for ever.
Now in the shadow of thy trees
Still lovely in the tainted breeze,
The fell Plague-Spirit grimly lies
And broods, as in despite
Of uncomplaining lifelessness,
On the troops of silent shades that press
Into the churchyard's cold recess,
From that region of delight.

Last summer from the school-house door,
When the glad play-bell was ringing,
What shoals of bright-haired elves would pour
Like small waves racing on the shore,
In dance of rapture singing!
Oft by yon little silver well,
Now sleeping in neglected cell,
The village-maid would stand,
While resting on the mossy bank
With freshened soul the traveller drank
The cold cup from her hand;
Haply some soldier from the war,
Who would remember long and far
That Lily of the Land.
And still the green is bright with flowers,
And dancing through the sunny hours,
Like blossoms from enchanted bowers
On a sudden wafted by,
Obedient to the changeful air,
And proudly feeling they are fair,
Glide bird and butterfly.

But where is the tiny hunter-rout
That revelled on with dance and shout
Against their airy prey?
Alas! the fearless linnet sings,
And the bright insect folds its wings
Upon the dewy flower that springs
Above these children's clay.

And if to yon deserted well
Some solitary maid,
As she was wont at eve, should go—
There silent as her shade
She stands a while—then sad and slow
Walks home, afraid to think
Of many a loudly-laughing ring
That dipped their pitchers in that spring,
And lingered round its brink.

On—on—through woeful images
My spirit holds her way!
Death in each drooping flower she sees:
And oft the momentary breeze
Is singing of decay.
—So high upon the slender bough
Why hangs the crow her nest?
All undisturbed her young have lain
This spring-time in their nest;
Nor as they flew on tender wing
E'er feared the cross-bow or the sling.
Tame as the purpling turtle-dove,
That walks serene in human love,
The magpie hops from door to door;
And the hare, not fearing to be seen,
Doth gambol on the village green
As on the lonely moor.
The few sheep wandering by the brook
Have all a dim neglected look,
Oft bleating in their dumb distress
On her their sweet dead shepherdess.
The horses pasturing through the range
Of gateless fields all common now,
Free from the yoke enjoy the change,
To them a long long Sabbath-sleep!
Then gathering in one thunderous band,
Across the wild they sweep,
Tossing the long hair from their eyes—
Till far the living whirlwind flies
As o'er the desert sand.
From human let their course is free—
No lonely angler down the lea
Invites the zephyr's breath—
And the beggar far away doth roam,

Preferring in his hovel home
His penury to death.
On that green hedge a scattered row
Now weather-stained—once white as snow—
Of garments that have long been spread,
And now belong unto the dead,
Shroud-like proclaim to every eye,
"This is no place for charity!"

O blest are ye! unthinking creatures!
Rejoicing in your lowly natures,
Ye dance round human tombs!
Where gladlier sings the mountain lark
Than o'er the churchyard dim and dark!
Or where, than on the churchyard wall,
From the wild rose-tree brighter fall
Her transitory blooms!
What is it to that lovely sky
If all her worshippers should die!
As happily her splendours play
On the grave where human forms decay,
As o'er the dewy turf of morn,
Where the virgin, like a woodland fay
On wings of joy was borne.
—Even now a soft and silvery haze
Hill—village—tree—is steeping
In the loveliness of happier days,
Ere rose the voice of weeping!
When incense-fires from every hearth
To heaven stole beautiful from earth.

Sweet spire! that crown'st the house of God!
To thee my spirit turns,
While through a cloud the softened light
On thy yellow dial burns.
Ah, me! my bosom inly bleeds
To see the deep-worn path that leads
Unto that open gate!
In silent blackness it doth tell
How oft thy little sullen bell
Hath o'er the village tolled its knell,
In beauty desolate.
Oft, wandering by myself at night
Such spire hath risen in softened light
Before my gladdened eyes,—

And as I looked around to see
The village sleeping quietly
Beneath the quiet skies,—
Methought that 'mid her stars so bright,
The moon in placid mirth,
Was not in heaven a holier sight
Than God's house on the earth.
Sweet image ! transient in my soul !
That very bell hath ceased to toll
When the grave receives its dead—
And the last time it slowly swung,
'Twas by a dying stripling rung
O'er the sexton's hoary head !
All silent now from cot or hall !
Comes forth the sable funeral !
The Pastor is not there !
For yon sweet manse now empty stands,
Nor in its walls will holier hands
Be e'er held up in prayer.

THE DESOLATE VILLAGE.

SECOND DREAM.

BESSY BELL AND MARY GRAY.

O HUSHED be our souls as this burial-ground !
And let our feet without a sound
Glide o'er the mournful clay ;
For lo ! two radiant creatures flitting
O'er the gravestones ! now moveless sitting
On a low funeral mound ! 'Tis day !
And, but that ghosts where'er they rove
Do in their breathless beauty love
The cold, the wan, and the silent light
O'er the churchyard shed by the Queen of night,
Sure sister-Shades were they !
—Of many 'tis the holy faith,
E'er from the dying frame
Departs the latest lingering breath,
Its earthly garb the same,
A shadowy likeness still doth come,
A noiseless, pale-faced, beckoning wraith
To call the stranger home !
Or, are ye angels, who from bliss,
With dewy fall, unto our earth
On wings of Paradise descend,
The grave of innocence to kiss,
And tears of an immortal birth
With human tears to blend ?
Ay ! there they sit ! like earthly creatures
With softer, sadder, fainter features !
A halo round each head ;
Fair things whose earthly course is o'er,
And who bring from some far-distant shore
The beauty that on earth they wore,
With the silence of the dead.

The dream of ghost and angel fades,
And I gaze upon two orphan-maids,
Frail creatures, doomed to die!
Spirits may be fair in their heavenly sleep,
But sure when mortal beings weep
In tears a beauty lies more deep,
The glimmering of mortality!
Their aged friend in slumber lies,
And hath closed for an hour the only eyes
That ever cheered their orphan-state,
At the hour of birth left desolate!
She sleeps! and now these maids have come
With mournful hearts to this mournful home,
Led here by a pensive train
Of thoughts still brooding on the dead;
For they have watched the breast of pain
Till it moved not on its bed,
The lifeless lips together prest,
And many a ghastly body drest,
And framed the shroud for the corse of bone
That lay unheeded and alone,
When all its friends were dead and gone!

So they walk not to yon breezy mountain
To sit in the shade of its silvery fountain,
And 'mid that lofty air serene
Forget the dim and wailing scene
That spreads beneath their feet.
They walk not down yon fairy stream
Whose liquid lapses sweet
Might wrap them in some happy dream
Of a pure, calm, far retreat,
As on that rivulet seems to flow,
Escaping from a world of woe.
But this still realm is their delight,
And hither they repair
Communion with the dead to hold.
Peaceful, as at the fall of night,
Two little lambkins gliding white
Return unto the gentle air
That sleeps within the fold.
Or like two birds to their lonely nest,
Or wearied waves to their bay of rest,
Or fleecy clouds, when their race is run,

That hang, in their own beauty blest,
'Mid the calm that sanctifies the west
Around the setting sun.

Phantoms! ye waken to mine eye
Sweet trains of earthly imagery :—
Whate'er on Nature's breast is found
In loveliness without a sound,
That silent seems to soul and sense,
Emblem of perfect innocence :
Two radiant dewdrops that repose
On mossy bank at evening's close,
And happy in the gentle weather,
In beauty disappear together :
Two flowers upon the lonesome moor,
When a dim day of storm is o'er,
Lifting up their yellow hair
To meet the balm of the slumbering air :
Two sea-birds from the troubled ocean
Floating with a snowy motion,
In the absence of the gale
Over a sweet inland vale :
Two early-risen stars that lie
Together on the evening-sky,
And imperceptibly pursue
Their walk along the depths of blue.
—Sweet beings! on my dreams ye rise
With all your frail humanities!
Nor earth below, nor heaven above,
An image yields of peace and love,
So perfect as your pensive breath
That brings unsought a dream of death ;
Each sigh more touching than the last,
Till life's pathetic tune be past!

THE DESOLATE VILLAGE.

THIRD DREAM.

THE DEPARTURE.

The grave is filled and the turf is spread
To grow together o'er the dead.
The little daisies bright and fair
Are looking up scarce injured there,
And one warm night of summer-dew
Will all their wonted smiles renew,
Restoring to its blooming rest
A soft couch for the sky-lark's breast.
The funeral-party, one by one
Have given their blessing and are gone—
Prepared themselves ere long to die,
A small, sad, silent company.
The orphans robed in spotless white
Yet linger in the holy ground,
And shed all o'er that peaceful mound
A radiance like the wan moonlight.
—Then from their mother's grave they glide
Out of the churchyard side by side.
Just at the gate they pause and turn—
I hear sad blended voices mourn
"Mother, farewell!" the last endeavour
To send their souls back to the clay.
Then they hide their eyes—and walk away
From her grave—now and for ever!

Not till this parting invocation
To their mother's buried breast,
Had they felt the power of desolation!
Long as she lived, the village lay
Calm—unrepining in decay—

For grief was its own consolation,
And death seemed only rest.
—But now a dim and sullen breath
Hath charactered the face of death ;
And tears, and sighs, and sobs, and wailing,
All round—o'er human joy prevailing—
Or 'mid the pausing fits of woe,
Wild silence, like a depth of snow
Shrouding in slumber stern and dull
The spring-fields late so beautiful,
Upon their fainting spirits press
With weight of utter hopelessness,
And drive them off, they heed not where,
So that oblivion's ebbless wave
May lie for ever on one grave,
One village of despair.

Faint with such spectacles of woe
Towards their solitary home
Across the village-green they go—
Eyeing the streamlet's murmuring flow,
Where melt away the specks of foam,
Like human creatures dying
'Mid their voyage down life's peaceful stream,
Upon the bosom of a dream
In thoughtless pleasure lying.
Calm reveries of composing grief !
Whose very sadness yields relief
To heart, and soul, and eye.
The Orphans look around—and lo !
How touching is that lilac's glow,
Beneath the tall laburnum's bow
That dazzling spans the sky !
That golden gleam—that gentle fire
Forces even anguish to admire ;
And gently cheers away distress
By the power of nature's loveliness.
From many a little garden steal
Odours that have been wasting long
A sweetness there was none to feel ;
And from the hidden flowers a song
Of bees, in happy multitude
All busy in that solitude,
An image brings of all the strife
And gladness of superior life,

Till man seem, 'mid these insects blest,
A brother-insect hardly missed.

They seize that transient calm; the door
Of their own cottage open stands—
Far lonelier than one hour before,
When they with weak and trembling hands
The head of that dear coffin bore
Unto its darksome bed!
To them far drearier than the tomb,
The naked silence of the room
Deserted by the dead.
They kiss the dim and senseless walls,
Then hurry fast away;
Some sudden thought their feet recalls,
And trifles urge their stay,
Till with the violence of despair
They rush into the open air,
And bless its thatch and sheltering tree,
Then leave it everlastingly!
—On, on they go, in sorrow blind,
Yet with a still and gentle motion
That speaks the inner soul resigned;
Like little billows o'er the ocean
Still flowing on with tide and wind,
And though the tempest smite their breast,
Reaching at last some bay of rest.

God bless them on their pilgrimage!
And may His hand divine
With healing dew their woes assuage,
When they have reached that silent shrine
By nature framed in the open air,
With soft turf for the knees of prayer,
And dome of many a pastoral hill
Lying in heaven serene and still;
For pilgrims ne'er to Sion went
More mournful, or more innocent,
Before the rueful Cross to lie
At midnight on Mount Calvary.
Two favourite sheep before them go—
Each with its lambs of spotless snow
Frisking around with pattering feet,
With peaceful eyes and happy bleat.

Happy! yet like a soft complaint!
As if at times the voice of sorrow
Through the hushed air came breathing faint
From blessèd things that fear no morrow.
—Each Shepherdess holds in her hand
A verdant crook of the willow-wand,
Wreathed round with melancholy flowers
Gathered 'mid the hills in happier hours.
In a small cage a thrush is sitting—
Or restless as the light
That through his sunny prison plays,
From perch to perch each moment flitting,
His quick and glancing eye surveys
The novel trees and fields so bright,
And like a torrent gushing strong
He sends through heaven his sudden song,
A song that all dim thought destroys,
And breathes o'er all its own wild joys.

As on the Orphans hold their way
Through the stillness of the dying day,
Fairies might they seem who are returning,
At the end of some allotted time,
Unto their own immortal clime;
Each bearing in its lovely hand
Some small memorial of the land
Where they, like common human frames,
And called by gentle Christian names,
For long had been sojourning;
Some little fair insensate thing,
Relic of that wild visiting!
Bird that beneath a brighter spring
Of its own vanished earth will sing;
Those harmless creatures that will glide
O'er faëry vales in earthly snow,
And from the faëry river's flow
Come forth more purely beautified.

Now with a wild and mournful song,
The fair procession moves along,
While, by that tune so sweet
The little flock delighted, press
As if with human tenderness
Around the singer's feet.

Up—up the gentle slope they wind,
Leaving the laughing flowers behind
That seem to court their stay.
One moment on the top they stand,
At the wild-unfolding vale's command,
—Then down into that faëry land
Dream-like they sink away!

LINES

WRITTEN ON SEEING A PICTURE BY BERGHEM, OF

AN ASS IN A STORM-SHOWER.

Poor wretch! that blasted leafless tree,
More frail and death-like even than thee,
Can yield no shelter to thy shivering form;
The sleet, the rain, the wind of Heaven
Full in thy face are coldly driven,
As if thou wert alone the object of the storm.

Yet chilled with cold, and drenched with rain,
Mild creature! thou dost not complain
By sound or look of these ungracious skies;
Calmly as if in friendly shed,
There stand'st thou, with unmoving head,
And a grave, patient meekness in thy half-closed eyes.

Long could my thoughtful spirit gaze
On thee; nor am I loth to praise
Him who in moral mood this image drew;
And yet, methinks, that I could frame
An image different, yet the same,
More pleasing to the heart, and yet to Nature true.

Behold a lane retired and green,
Winding amid a forest-scene
With blooming furze in many a radiant heap;
There is a browsing Ass espied,
One colt is frisking by her side,
And one among her feet is safely stretched in sleep.

And lo! a little maiden stands,
With thistles in her tender hands,

Tempting with kindly words the colt to eat;
Or gently down before him lays,
With words of solace and of praise,
Plucked from the untrodden turf the herbage soft and
sweet.

The summer sun is sinking down,
And the peasants from the market town
With cheerful hearts are to their homes returning;
Groups of gay children too are there,
Stirring with mirth the silent air,
O'er all their eager eyes the light of laughter burning.

The Ass hath got his burthen still!
The merry elves the panniers fill;
Delighted there from side to side they swing:
The creature heeds nor shout nor call,
But jogs on careless of them all,
Whether in harmless sport they gaily strike or sing.

A gypsy-group! the secret wood
Stirs through its leafy solitude,
As wheels the dance to many a jocund tune;
The unpanniered Ass slowly retires
From the brown tents, and sparkling fires,
And silently feeds on beneath the silent moon.

The Moon sits o'er the huge oak tree,
More pensive 'mid this scene of glee
That mocks the hour of beauty and of rest;
The soul of all her softest rays
On yonder placid creature plays,
As if she wished to cheer the hardships of the opprest.

But now the silver moonbeams fade,
And, peeping through a flowery glade,
Hushed as a wild-bird's nest, a cottage lies:
An Ass stands meek and patient there,
And by her side a spectre fair,
To drink the balmy cup once more before she dies.

With tenderest care the pitying dame
Supports the dying maiden's frame,

And strives with laughing looks her heart to cheer ;
While playful children crowd around
To catch her eye by smile or sound,
Unconscious of the doom that waits their lady dear !

I feel this mournful dream impart
A holier image to my heart,
For oft doth grief to thoughts sublime give birth :
Blest creature ! through the solemn night,
I see thee bathed in heavenly light,
Shed from that wondrous child—The Saviour of the
Earth.

When flying Herod's murderous rage,
Thou on that wretched pilgrimage
Didst gently near the virgin-mother lie ;
On thee the humble Jesus sate,
When thousands rushed to Salem's gate
To see 'mid holy hymns the sinless man pass by.

Happy thou wert, nor low thy praise,
In peaceful patriarchal days,
When countless tents slow passed from land to land
Like clouds o'er heaven : the gentle race
Such quiet scene did meetly grace,
Circling the pastoral camp in many a stately band.

Poor wretch ! my musing dream is o'er ;
Thy shivering form I view once more,
And all the pains thy race is doomed to prove ;
But they whose thoughtful spirits see
The truth of life, will pause with me,
And bless thee in a voice of gentleness and love !

PRAYER TO SLEEP.

O GENTLE Sleep, wilt thou lay thy head
For one little hour on thy lover's bed,
And none but the silent stars of night
Shall witness be to our delight!

Alas! 'tis said that the couch must be
Of the Eider-down that is spread for thee,
So, I in my sorrow must lie alone,
For mine, sweet Sleep! is a couch of stone.

Music to thee I know is dear;
Then, the saddest of music is ever here,
For Grief sits with me in my cell,
And she is a syren who singeth well.

But thou, glad Sleep! lovest gladsome airs,
And wilt only come to thy lover's prayers
When the bells of merriment are ringing,
And bliss with liquid voice is singing.

Fair Sleep! so long in thy beauty wooed,
No rival hast thou in my solitude;
Be mine, my Love! and we two will lie
Embraced for ever—or awake to die!

Dear Sleep! farewell!—hour, hour, hour, hour,
Will slowly bring on the gleam of morrow,
But thou art Joy's faithful paramour,
And lie wilt thou not in the arms of Sorrow.

LINES

WRITTEN ON READING

MR CLARKSON'S HISTORY OF THE ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE TRADE.

'Mid the august and never-dying light
Of constellated spirits, who have gained
A throne in heaven, by power of heavenly acts,
And leave their names immortal and unchanged
On earth, even as the names of sun and moon,
See'st thou, my soul! 'mid all that radiant host
One worthier of thy love and reverence,
Than He, the fearless spirit who went forth,
Mailed in the armour of invincible faith,
And bearing in his grasp the spear of truth,
Fit to destroy or save,—went forth to wage,
Against the fierce array of bloody men,
Avarice and ignorance, cruelty and hate,
A holy warfare! Deep within his soul,
The groans of anguish, and the clank of chains,
Dwelt ceaseless as a cataract, and filled
The secret haunts of meditative prayer.
Encircled by the silence of the hearth,
The evening silence of a happy home;
Upon his midnight bed, when working soul
Turns inward, and the steady flow of thought
Is all we feel of life; in crowded rooms,
Where mere sensation oft takes place of mind,
And all time seems the present; in the sun,
The joyful splendour of a summer-day;
Or 'neath the moon, the calm and gentle night;
Where'er he moved, one vision ever filled
His restless spirit. 'Twas a vision bright
With colours born in heaven, yet oh! bedimmed
With breath of sorrow, sighs, and tears, and blood!

Before him lay a quarter of the world,
A mighty land, washed by unnumbered floods,
Born in her bosom,—floods that to the sea
Roll ocean-like, or in the central wilds
Fade like the dim day melting into night;
A land all teeming with the gorgeous show
Of nature in profuse magnificence!
Valleys and groves, where untamed herds have ranged
Without a master since the birth of time!
Fountains and caves filled with the hidden light
Of diamond and of ruby, only viewed
With admiration by the unenvying sun!
Millions of beings like himself he sees
In stature and in soul,—the sons of God,
Destined to do Him homage, and to lift
Their fearless brows unto the burning sky,
Stamped with His holy image! Noble shapes,
Kings of the desert, men whose stately tread
Brings from the dust the sound of liberty!
The vision fades not here; he sees the gloom
That lies upon these kingdoms of the sun,
And makes them darker than the dreary realms,
Scarce-moving at the pole. A sluggish flow
Attends those floods so great and beautiful,
Rolling in majesty that none adores.
And lo! the faces of those stately men,
Silent as death, or changed to ghastly shapes
By madness and despair! His ears are torn
By shrieks and ravings, loud, and long, and wild,
Or the deep-muttered curse of sullen hearts,
Scorning in bitter woe their gnawing chains!
He sees, and shuddering feels the vision true,
A pale-faced band, who in his mother-isle
First looked upon the day, beneath its light
Dare to be tyrants, and with coward deeds
Sullying the glory of the Queen of waves!
He sees that famous Isle, whose very winds
Dissolve like icicles the tyrant's chains,
On Afric bind them firm as adamant,
Yet boast, with false and hollow gratitude,
Of all the troubled nations of the earth
That she alone is free! The awful sight
Appals not him; he draws his lonely breath
Without a tremor; for a voice is heard
Breathed by no human lips,—heard by his soul,—

That he by Heaven is chosen to restore
Mercy on earth, a mighty conqueror
Over the sins and miseries of man.
The work is done ! the Niger's sullen waves
Have heard the tidings,—and the orient Sun
Beholds them rolling on to meet his light
In joyful beauty.—Tombût's spiry towers
Are bright without the brightness of the day,
And Houssa wakening from his age-long trance
Of woe, amid the desert, smiles to hear
The last faint echo of the blissful sound.

LINES

WRITTEN ON OAK ISLAND, KILLARNEY.

FAR in the heart of Island-solitude
Our tent was pitched, beneath a grove of oaks.
A scene more solemn never hermit chose
For penitence and prayer; nor pensive bard
Wept over, dreaming of his dying hour
And the happy stillness of a sylvan grave.
That ancient wood was breathless as a tomb,
Save when the stockdove in his central haunt
Awakening suddenly a loud deep song,
Startled the silence, ev'n as with a peal
Of faint and far-off thunder. From the door
Of our lone tent, thus wildly-canopied,
Down to the lake-side, gently sloped a bank,
Like the heaved bosom of the sea-green wave;
Where the pure waters of a crescent bay
Kissed with a murmuring joy the fragrant heath,
Impurpled with its bloom. On either side,
As emulous of that refulgent bank,
Hills brightly-girdled with green arbutus-groves
Rose up to heaven; yet bowed their lofty heads
In homage to that mountain * where the Bird
Of Jove abides. Right in the front he spread
His cliffs, his caverns, and his streamy glens,
Flinging an air of wild sublimity
O'er beauty's quiet home! Yet, not exiled
Was that fair spirit from the home she loved.
Her sweet smile trembled on the o'ershadowed wave
Even at the mountain's foot; like dew it lay

* Eagle Mountain.

On the relenting sternness of the rocks;
The black and sullen entrances of caves
Dropped wild-flowers at her bidding; ere it reached
Her ear, the tumult of the cataract
Was pleasant music; but her perfect bliss
Came from the clear blue sky, and from the clouds
That seemed eternal in their depth of rest.

I closed mine eye, that, undisturbed by sense
Of outward objects, I might gaze and gaze
On that transcendent landscape, as it lay
Dreamily imaged in my happy soul.
But all seemed wavering as the restless sea,
Or the white morning-mist. Soon darkness veiled
The far-withdrawing vision, and a blank
Like blindness or decay of memory
Brooded where all those glorious things had shone.

Up started fancy from her dreamless sleep!
For lo! the loveliest of all earthly lakes
(And let me breathe thy name so beautiful,
Winander!) lay before me, in the light
Of the sweet harvest-moon. She, gracious Queen,
Hung motionless above the liquid vale,
To her as dear as her own native heaven!
The cliffs that tower round that romantic shore
Seemed jealous of her love, and gave their breasts
To meet her tender smiles: each shaded bay,
Bright with the image of its guardian star,
To catch one glimpse seemed opening its fair trees;
Delighting in her mild and placid eye
The whispering islands softly hymned her praise:
Gladly had all the woods revealed their depths
To the spirit glimmering on their topmost boughs;
And the far mountains that by day appear
So stern and frowning, by her power subdued,
Flung down their mighty bulks into repose
Like Genii by enchantment lulled asleep!
Then, as if wafted on an angel's wing,
Wondering I found myself beneath the shade
Of my own sycamore, that from its heart
Did sing a mournful and pathetic strain,
Gladsome withal! a strain that lowly breathed
"Welcome, O Wanderer! welcome to thy home!"

A light was in my cottage—I beheld
A shadow move across it—then I heard
A soft step gently stealing through the gloom.
Long was the silence that enchained our souls!
For by his own sweet fire, a husband sat
Once more! sat gazing on his first-born child,
Who on his sinless mother's happy breast
An emblem seemed of innocence in heaven!

THE FALLEN OAK,

A VISION.

SCENE — *A Wood, near Keswick, belonging to Greenwich Hospital.*

I.

BENEATH the shadow of an ancient oak,
Dreaming I lay, far 'mid a solemn wood,
When a noise like thunder stirred the solitude,
And from that trance I suddenly awoke!
A noble tree came crashing to the ground,
Through the dark forest opening out a glade;
While all its hundred branches stretching round,
Crushed the tall hazels in its ample shade.
Methought, the vanquished monarch as he died
Uttered a groan: while loud and taunting cheers
The woodmen raised o'er him whose stubborn pride
Had braved the seasons for an hundred years.
It seemed a savage shout, a senseless scorn,
Nor long prevailed amid the awful gloom;
Sad looked the forest of her glory shorn,
Reverend with age, yet bright in vigour's bloom,
Slain in his hour of strength, a giant in his tomb.

II.

I closed mine eyes, nor could I brook to gaze
On the wild havoc in one moment done;
Hateful to me shone forth the blessèd sun,
As through the new formed void he poured his rays.
Then rose a dream before my sleeping soul!
A wood-nymph tearing her dishevelled hair,
And wailing loud, from a long vista stole,
And eyed the ruin with a fixed despair.

The velvet moss, that bathed its roots in green,
For many a happy day had been her seat;
Than valley wide more dear this secret scene;
—She asked no music but the rustling sweet
Of the rejoicing leaves; now, all is gone,
That touched the Dryad's heart with pure delight.
Soon shall the axe destroy her fallen throne,
Its leaves of gold, its bark so glossy bright—
—But now she hastes away,—death-sickening at the sight!

III.

A nobler shape supplied the Dryad's place;
Soon as I saw the spirit in her eye,
I knew the mountain-goddess, Liberty,
And in adoring reverence veiled my face.
Smiling she stood beside the prostrate oak,
While a stern pleasure swelled her lofty breast,
And thus, methought, in thrilling accents spoke—
"Not long, my darling Tree! must be thy rest!
Glorious thou wert, when towering through the skies
In winter-storms, or summer's balmy breath;
And thou, my Tree! shalt gloriously arise,
In life majestic, terrible in death!
For thou shalt float above the roaring wave,
Where flags denouncing battle stream afar;—
Thou wert, from birth, devoted to the brave,
And thou shalt sail on like a blazing star,
Bearing victorious NELSON through the storms of war!"

NATURE OUTRAGED.

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

TO ROBERT SYM, ESQ., EDINBURGH.

Once, on the very gentlest stillest day
That ever Spring did in her gladness breathe
O'er this delightful earth, I left my home
With a belovèd friend, who ne'er before
Had been among these mountains,—but whose heart,
Led by the famous poets, through the air
Serene of Nature oft had voyagèd,
On fancy's wing, and in her magic bowers
Reposed, by wildest music sung to sleep :—
So that, enamoured of the imaged forms
Of beauty in his soul, with holiest zeal
He longed to hail the fair original,
And do her spiritual homage.

That his love
Might, consonant to Nature's dictate wise,
From quiet impulse grow, and to the power
Of meditation and connecting thought,
Rather than startling glories of the eye,
Owe its enthronement in his inmost heart,
I led him to behold a little lake,
Which I so often in my lonely walks
Had visited, but never yet had seen
One human being on its banks, that I
Thought it mine own almost, so thither took
My friend, assured he could not choose but love
A scene so loved by me !

Before we reached
The dell wherein this little lake doth sleep,
Into involuntary praise of all
Its pensive loveliness, my happy heart

Would frequent burst, and from those lyric songs,
That, sweetly warbling round the pastoral banks
Of Grassmere, on its silver waves have shed
The undying sunshine of a poet's soul,
I breathed such touching strains as suited well
The mild spring-day, and that secluded scene,
Towards which, in full assurance of delight,
We two then walked in peace.

On the green slope
Of a romantic glade, we sat us down,
Amid the fragrance of the yellow broom,
While o'er our heads the weeping birch-tree streamed
Its branches arching like a fountain-shower,
Then looked towards the lake,—with hearts prepared
For the warm reception of all lovely forms
Enrobed in loveliest radiance, such as oft
Had steeped my spirit in a holy calm,
And made it by the touch of purest joy
Still as an infant's dream.

But where had fled
The paradise beloved in former days?
I looked upon the countenance of my friend,
Who, lost in strange and sorrowful surprise,
Could scarce forbear to smile. Is this, he cried,
The lone retreat, where from the secret top
Of Helicon, the wild-eyed muse descends
To bless thy slumbers? this the virgin scene
Where beauty smiles in undisturbèd peace?

I looked again: but ne'er did lover gaze,
At last returning from some foreign clime,
With more affectionate sorrow on the face
That he left fair in youth, than I did gaze
On the altered features of my darling vale,
That, 'mid the barbarous outrages of art,
Retained, I ween, a heavenly character
That nothing could destroy. Yet much was lost
Of its original brightness: Much was there,
Marring the spirit I remembered once
Perfectly beautiful. The meadow field,
That with its rich and placid verdure lay
Even like a sister-lake, with nought to break
The smoothness of its bosom, save the swing

Of the hoar Canna, or, more snowy white,
The young lamb frisking in the joy of life,—
O grief! a garden, all unlike, I ween,
To that where bloomed the fair Hesperides,
Usurped the seat of Nature, while a wall
Of most bedazzling splendour, o'er whose height,
The little birds, content to flit along
From bush to bush, could never dare to fly,
Preserved from those who knew no ill intent,
Fruit-trees exotic, and flowers passing rare,
Less lovely far than many a one that bloomed
Unnoticed in the woods.

And lo! a house,
An elegant villa! in the Grecian style!
Doubtless contrived by some great architect
Who had an Attic soul; and in the shade
Of Academe or the Lyceum walked,
Forming conceptions fair and beautiful.
Blessèd for ever be the sculptor's art!
It hath created guardian deities
To shield the holy building,—heathen gods
And goddesses, at which the peasant stares
With most perplexing wonder; and light Fauns
That the good owner's unpoetic soul
Could not among the umbrage of the groves
Imagine, here, for ever in his sight,
In one unwearied posture frisk in stone.

My friend, quoth I, forgive these words of mine,
That haply seem more sportive than becomes
A soul that feels for Nature's sanctity
Thus blindly outraged; but when evil work
Admits no remedy, we then are glad
Even from ourselves to hide, in mirth constrained,
An unavailing sorrow. Oh! my friend,
Hadst thou beheld, as I, the glorious rock
By that audacious mansion hid for ever,
—Glorious I well might call it, with bright bands
Of flowers, and weeds as beautiful as flowers
Refulgent,—crowned, as with a diadem,
With oaks that loved their birth-place, and alive
With the wild tones of echo, bird, and bee,—
Thou couldst have wept to think that paltry Art
Could so prevail o'er Nature, and weak man

Thus stand between thee and the works of God.
Well might the Naiad of that stream complain!
The glare of day hath driven her from her haunts,
Shady no more: The woodman's axe hath cleared
The useless hazels where the linnet hung
Her secret nest; and yon hoar waterfall,
Whose misty spray rose through the freshened leaves
To heaven, like Nature's incense, and whose sound
Came deadened through the multitude of boughs
Like a wild anthem by some spirit sung,
Now looks as cheerless as the late-left snow
Upon the mountain's breast, and sends a voice,
From the bare rocks, of dreariness and woe.
See! farther down the streamlet, art hath framed
A delicate cascade! The channel stones
Hallowed by rushing waters, and more green
Even than the thought of greenness in the soul,
Are gone; and pebbles, carefully arranged
By size and colour, at the bottom lie
Imprisoned; while a smooth and shaven lawn,
With graceful gravel walks most serpentine,
Surrounds the noisy wonder, and sends up
A smile of scorn unto the rocky fells,
Where, 'mid the rough fern, bleat the sheltered sheep.

Oft hath the poet's eye on these wild fells
Beheld entrancing visions;—but the cliffs,
In unscaled majesty, must frown no more;
No more the coves profound draw down the soul
Into their stern dominion: even the clouds,
Floating or settling on the mountain's breast,
Must be adored no more:—far other forms
Delight his gaze, to whom, alas, belongs
This luckless vale.—On every eminence,
Smiles some gay image of the builder's soul,
Watch-tower or summer-house, where oft, at eve,
He meditates to go, with book in hand,
And read in solitude; or weather-cock,
To tell which way the wind doth blow; or fort,
Commanding every station in the vale
Where enemy might encamp, and from whose height
A gaudy flag might flutter, when he hears
With a true British pride of Frenchmen slain,
Ten thousand in one battle, lying grim
By the brave English, their dead conquerors!

Such was the spirit of the words I used
On witnessing such sacrilege. We turned
Homewards in silence, even as from the grave
Of one in early youth untimely dead,
And all that to my pensive friend I said
Upon our walk, were some few words of grief,
That thoughtlessness and folly, in one day,
Could render vain the mystic processes
Of Nature, working for a thousand years
The work of love and beauty ; so that Heaven
Might shed its gracious dews upon the earth,
Its sunshine and its rain, till living flowers
Rose up in myriads to attest its power,
But, in the midst of this glad jubilee,
A blinded mortal came, and with a nod,
Thus rendering ignorance worse than wickedness,
Bid his base servants "tear from Nature's book
A blissful leaf with worst impiety."

If thou, whose heart has listened to my song,
From Nature hold'st some fair inheritance
Like that whose mournful ruins I deplore,
Remember that thy birthright doth impose
High duties on thee, that must be performed,
Else thou canst not be happy. Thou must watch
With holy zeal o'er Nature while she sleeps,
That nought may break her rest ; her waking smiles
Thou must preserve and worship ; and the gloom
That sometimes lies like night upon her face,
Creating awful thoughts, that gloom must hush
The beatings of thy heart, as if it lay
Like the dread shadow of eternity.
Beauteous thy home upon this beauteous earth,
And God hath given it to thee : therefore, learn
The laws by which the Eternal doth sublime
And sanctify his works, that thou mayest see
The hidden glory veiled from vulgar eyes,
And by the homage of enlightened love,
Repay the power that blest thee. Thou shouldst stand
Ofttimes amid thy dwelling-place, with awe
Stronger than love, even like a pious man
Who in some great cathedral, while the chant
Of hymns is in his soul, no more beholds
The pillars rise august and beautiful,
Nor the dim grandeur of the roof that hangs

Far, far above his head, but only sees
The opening heaven-gates, and the white-robed bands
Of spirits prostrate in adoring praise.
So shalt thou to thy death-hour find a friend,
A gracious friend in Nature, and thy name,
As the rapt traveller through thy fair domains
Oft-lingering journeys, shall with gentle voice
Be breathed amid the solitude, and linked
With those enlightened spirits that promote
The happiness of others by their own,
The consummation of all earthly joy.

MELROSE ABBEY.

It was not when the sun through the glittering sky,
In summer's joyful majesty,
Looked from his cloudless height ;—
It was not when the sun was sinking down,
And tinging the ruin's mossy brown
With gleams of ruddy light ;—
Nor yet when the moon, like a pilgrim fair,
'Mid star and planet journeyed slow,
And, mellowing the stillness of the air,
Smiled on the world below ;—
That, Melrose ! 'mid thy mouldering pride,
All breathless and alone,
I grasped the dreams to day denied,
High dreams of ages gone !—
Had unshrieved guilt for one moment been there,
His heart had turned to stone !
For oft, though felt no moving gale,
Like restless ghost in glimmering shroud,
Through lofty Oriel opening pale
Was seen the hurrying cloud ;
And, at doubtful distance, each broken wall
Frowned black as bier's mysterious pall
From mountain-cave beheld by ghastly seer ;
It seemed as if sound had ceased to be ;
Nor dust from arch, nor leaf from tree,
Relieved the noiseless ear.
The owl had sailed from her silent tower,
Tweed hushed his weary wave,
The time was midnight's moonless hour,
My seat a dreaded Douglas' grave!

My being was sublimed by joy,
My heart was big, yet I could not weep ;
I felt that God would ne'er destroy
The mighty in their trancèd sleep.
Within the pile no common dead
Lay blended with their kindred mould ;

Theirs were the hearts that prayed, or bled,
In cloister dim, on death-plain red,
The pious and the bold.
There slept the saint whose holy strains
Brought seraphs round the dying bed ;
And there the warrior, who to chains
Ne'er stooped his crested head.
I felt my spirit sink or swell
With patriot rage or lowly fear,
As battle-trump, or convent-bell,
Rung in my trancèd ear.
But dreams prevailed of loftier mood,
When stern beneath the chancel high
My country's spectre-monarch stood,
All sheathed in glittering panoply ;
Then I thought with pride what noble blood
Had flowed for the hills of liberty.
—High the resolves that fill the brain
With transports trembling upon pain,
When the veil of time is rent in twain,
That hides the glory past !
The scene may fade that gave them birth,
But they perish not with the perishing earth ;
For ever shall they last.
And higher, I ween, is that mystic might
That comes to the soul from the silent night,
When she walks, like a disembodied spirit,
Through realms her sister shades inherit,
And soft as the breath of those blessèd flowers
That smile in Heaven's unfading bowers,
With love and awe, a voice she hears
Murmuring assurance of immortal years.
In hours of loneliness and woe
Which even the best and wisest know,
How leaps the lightened heart to seize
On the bliss that comes with dreams like these !
As fair before the mental eye
The pomp and beauty of the dream return,
Dejected virtue calms her sigh,
And leans resigned on memory's urn.
She feels how weak is mortal pain,
When each thought that starts to life again,
Tells that she hath not lived in vain.
—For Solitude, by Wisdom wooed,
Is ever mistress of delight,

And even in gloom or tumult viewed,
She sanctifies their living blood
Who learn her lore aright.
The dreams her awful face imparts,
Unhallowed mirth destroy ;
Her griefs bestow on noble hearts
A nobler power of joy.
While hope and faith the soul thus fill,
We smile at chance distress,
And drink the cup of human ill
In stately happiness.
Thus even where death his empire keeps
Life holds the pageant vain,
And where the lofty spirit sleeps,
There lofty visions reign.
Yea, often to night-wandering man
A power fate's dim decrees to scan,
In lonely trance by bliss is given ;
And midnight's starless silence rolls
A giant vigour through our souls,
That stamps us sons of Heaven.

Then, MELROSE ! Tomb of heroes old !
Blest be the hour I dwelt with thee ;
The visions that can ne'er be told
That only poets in their joy can see,
The glory born above the sky
The deep-felt weight of sanctity !
Thy massy towers I view no more
Through brooding darkness rising hoar,
Like a broad line of light dim seen
Some sable mountain-cleft between !
Since that dread hour, hath human thought
A thousand gay creations brought
Before my earthly eye ;
I to the world have lent an ear,
Delighted all the while to hear
The voice of poor mortality.
Yet, not the less doth there abide
Deep in my soul a holy pride,
That knows by whom it was bestowed,
Lofty to man, but low to God ;
Such pride as hymning angels cherish,
Blest in the blaze where man would perish.

LINES

WRITTEN BY MOONLIGHT AT SEA.

Ah me ! in dreams of struggling dread,
Let foolish tears no more be shed,
Tears wept on bended knee,
Though years of absence slowly roll
Between us and some darling soul
Who lives upon the sea !
Weep, weep not for the mariner,
Though distant far he roam,
And have no lovely resting-place
That he can call his home.
Friends hath he in the wilderness,
And with those friends he lives in bliss
Without one pining sigh !
The waves that round his vessel crowd,
The guiding star, the breezy cloud,
The music of the sky.
And, dearer even than Heaven's sweet light,
He gazes on that Wonder bright,
When sporting with the gales,
Or lying in a beauteous sleep
Above her shadow in the deep,
—The Ship in which he sails.
Then weep not for the mariner !
He needeth not thy tears ;
From his soul the Ocean's midnight voice
Dispels all mortal fears.
Quietly slumber shepherd-men
In the silence of some inland glen,
Lulled by the gentlest sounds of air and earth ;
Yet as quietly rests the mariner,
Nor wants for dreams as melting fair
Amid the Ocean's mirth.

THE NAMELESS STREAM.

Gentle as dew, a summer shower
In beauty bathed tree, herb, and flower,
And told the stream to murmur on
With quicker dance and livelier tone.
The mist lay steady on the fell,
While lustre steeped each smiling dell,
Such wild and fairy contrast made
The magic power of light and shade.
Through trees a little bridge was seen,
Glittering with yellow, red, and green,
As o'er the moss with playful glide
The sunbeam danced from side to side,
And made the ancient arch to glow
Various as Heaven's reflected bow.
Within the dripping grove was heard
Rustle or song of joyful bird;
The stir of rapture filled the air
From unseen myriads mingling there,
Life lay entranced in sinless mirth,
And Nature's hymn swam o'er the earth!

In this sweet hour of peace and love,
I chanced from restless joy to move,
When by my side a being stood
Fairer than Naiad of the flood,
Or her who ruled the forest scene
In days of yore, the Huntress Queen.
Wildness, subdued by quiet grace,
Played o'er the vision's radiant face,
Radiant with spirit fit to steer
Her flight around the starry sphere,
Yet, willing to sink down in rest
Upon a guardian mortal breast.
Her eyes were rather soft than bright,
And, when a smile half-closed their light,

They seemed amid the gleam divine
Like stars scarce seen through fair moonshine!
While ever, as with sportive air,
She lightly waved her clustering hair,
A thousand gleams the motion made,
Danced o'er the auburn's darker shade.

O Mary! I had known thee long,
Amid the gay, the thoughtless throng,
Where mien leaves modesty behind,
And manner takes the place of mind;
Where woman, though delightful still,
Quits Nature's ease for Fashion's skill,
Hides, by the gaudy gloss of art,
The simple beauty of her heart,
And, born to lift our souls to heaven,
Strives for the gaze despised when given,
Forgets her being's godlike power
To shine the wonder of an hour.
Oft had I sighed to think that thou,
An angel fair, couldst stoop so low;
And as with light and airy pride,
'Mid worldly souls I saw thee glide,
Wasting those smiles that love with tears
Might live on all his blessèd years,
Regret rose from thy causeless mirth,
That Heaven could thus be stained by Earth.

O vain regret! I should have known
Thy soul was strung to loftier tone,
That wisdom bade thee joyful range
Through worldly paths thou couldst not change,
And look with glad and sparkling eye
Even on life's cureless vanity.
—But now, thy being's inmost blood
Felt the deep power of solitude.
From Heaven a sudden glory broke,
And all thy angel soul awoke.
I hailed the impulse from above,
And friendship was sublimed to love.
Fair are the vales that peaceful sleep
'Mid mountain-silence lone and deep,
Sweet narrow lines of fertile earth,
'Mid frowns of horror, smiles of mirth!

Fair too the fixed and floating cloud,
The light obscure by eve bestowed,
The sky's blue stillness, and the breast
Of lakes, with all that stillness blest.
But dearer to my heart and eye,
Than valley, mountain, lake, or sky,
One Nameless Stream, whose happy flow
Blue as the heavens, or white as snow,
And gently-swelling sylvan side
By Mary's presence beautified,
Tell ever of expected years,
The wish that sighs, the bliss that fears,
Till taught at last no more to roam,
I worship the bright Star of Home.

ELEGY

ON THE DEATH OF AN INFANT.

Ere Margaret was three months old,
Her father laid her in the mould!
Poor Babe! her fleeting visit here
Was marked by many a sigh and tear,
And sudden starts of unknown pain
Oft seemed to shake her little brain!
Scarcely unto her ear was known
A yearning mother's gentle tone;
She could not by her smiles repay
The sleepless night, the anxious day;
And yet, at times, her eyes would rest
With gladness on that mother's breast,
And sinking, with a murmur there,
Like a hushed stir of vernal air,
We saw her little bosom move
Blest by the genial fount of love!
Gently the stroke of death did come,
And sent her to a heavenly home;
Ev'n like the wild harp's transient strain,
She slept—and never woke again!
And now, beneath her spotless shroud,
Like a pale star behind a cloud,
Or a young flower that dies in May,
Chilled by hoar-frost—the Baby lay.
Ah, me! it was a sad delight,
Through the dim stillness of the night,
While grief the glimmering air possest,
To mark her little bed of rest!
The sweet child bore no looks of death,
She seemed alive, though 'reft of breath;
Her lips retained their sunny glow,
But her cold cheek was pale as snow!

While thus she lay, no painful trace
Broke the fair silence of her face;
But something like a smile did play
Over the dead insensate clay,
As if a happy dream had shed
A halo round that guiltless head.

At morning light we took our way,
To drop the dear babe in the clay.
No mourners might that corse attend,
Save father—servant—neighbour—friend;
For none but real weepers gave
A blessing to mine infant's grave.
The vernal noon was soft and mild,
Meet for the funeral of a child;
Round the small grave the sunbeams stole,
Pure as the infant's sainted soul:
And th' opening heavens appeared to shed
A loving lustre o'er the dead.
The fair unfolding buds of Spring
Sustained our quiet sorrowing;
For wide o'er the rejoicing earth
Wild-flowers were springing in their mirth,
Of many a bright and heavenly dye,
Emblems of sinless infancy.
Oh! fairer, sweeter far than they,
My Flower now dropt into the clay!
Shut by the sod roof, smooth and even,
Her blossoms from the dews of heaven!

When evening came, the silent hearth,
Two nights before alive with mirth,
With dim and languid lustre shone,
As if it knew our babe was gone.
At once our spirits felt beguiled
Of grief—we spake not of our child—
Yet every word we softly said,
Told that our thoughts were with the dead.
I looked into the mother's face,
And a calm smile had taken place
Of tears, by Jesu's self approved!
Our only child, so much beloved,
Had left us for a cradle blest
Beyond a mortal mother's breast.—

We knew—we felt that God was kind—
What awful bliss to be resigned !

And is our home a silent cell
Moved only by the passing-bell,
That on that May-day morning clear
All our kind village wept to hear?
No—it is filled from morn till night
With smiles, shouts, dances of delight,
And songs of nature's bursting glee,
And wild elves' mimic minstrelsy ;
And rosy cheeks are sparkling there,
And orbs glide by of golden hair ;
And white arms wreathed in loving ring,
While Innocence is dallying
With that bright shape—her brother Joy !
—Who gave them may again destroy—
But dance along, ye blithesome crew,
And I will join the pastime too ;
For whether on life's mystic Tree
Fair blossoms shine resplendently,
Or one chill blast of passing air
Hath swept its broken branches bare,
The tempests blow, the sunbeams shine,
Alike, from Mercy's awful Shrine.

ART AND NATURE.

Sylph-like, and with a graceful pride,
I saw the wild Louisa glide
Along the dance's glittering row,
With footsteps soft as falling snow.
On all around her smiles she poured,
And though by all admired, adored,
She seemed to hold the homage light,
And careless claimed it as her right.
With syren voice the Lady sung:
Love on her tones enraptured hung,
While timid awe and fond desire
Came blended from her witching lyre.
While thus, with unresisted art,
The Enchantress melted every heart,
Amid the glance, the sigh, the smile,
Herself, unmoved and cold the while,
With inward pity eyed the scene,
Where all were subjects—she a Queen!

Again, I saw that Lady fair:
Oh! what a beauteous change was there!
In a sweet cottage of her own
She sat, and she was all alone,
Save a young child she sung to rest
On its soft bed, her fragrant breast.
With happy smiles and happy sighs,
She kissed the infant's closing eyes,
Then, o'er him in the cradle laid,
Moved her dear lips as if she prayed.
She blessed him in his father's name:
Lo! to her side that father came,
And, in a voice subdued and mild,
He blessed the mother and her child!
I thought upon the proud saloon,
And that Enchantress Queen; but soon,
Far-off Art's fading pageant stole,
And Nature filled my thoughtful soul!

LINES

WRITTEN IN A HIGHLAND GLEN.

To whom belongs this valley fair,
That sleeps beneath the filmy air,
  Even like a living thing?
Silent,—as infant at the breast,—
Save a still sound that speaks of rest,
  That streamlet's murmuring!

The heavens appear to love this vale;
Here clouds with scarce-seen motion sail,
  Or 'mid the silence lie.
By that blue arch, this beauteous earth
Mid evening's hour of dewy mirth
  Seems bound unto the sky.

O! that this lovely vale were mine!
Then, from glad youth to calm decline,
  My years would gently glide;
Hope would rejoice in endless dreams,
And memory's oft-returning gleams
  By peace be sanctified.

There would unto my soul be given,
From presence of that gracious heaven,
  A piety sublime
And thoughts would come of mystic mood,
To make in this deep solitude
  Eternity of time.

And did I ask to whom belonged
This vale?—I feel that I have wronged
  Nature's most gracious soul.

She spreads her glories o'er the earth,
And all her children from their birth
Are joint-heirs of the whole.

Yea! long as Nature's humblest child
Hath kept her Temple undefiled
By sinful sacrifice,
Earth's fairest scenes are all his own,
He is a monarch, and his throne
Is built amid the skies.

THE WIDOWED MOTHER.

Beside her Babe, who sweetly slept,
A widowed mother sat and wept
O'er years of love gone by;
And as the sobs thick-gathering came,
She murmured her dead husband's name
'Mid that sad lullaby.

Well might that lullaby be sad,
For not one single friend she had
On this cold-hearted earth;
The sea will not give back its prey—
And they were wrapt in foreign clay
Who gave the orphan birth.

Steadfastly as a star doth look
Upon a little murmuring brook,
She gazed upon the bosom
And fair brow of her sleeping son—
"O merciful Heaven! when I am gone
Thine is this earthly blossom!"

While thus she sat—a sunbeam broke
Into the room; the babe awoke,
And from his cradle smiled!
Ah me! what kindling smiles met there!
I know not whether was more fair,
The mother or her child!

With joy fresh-sprung from short alarms,
The smiler stretched his rosy arms,
And to her bosom leapt—

All tears at once were swept away,
And said a face as bright as day,—
"Forgive me that I wept!"

Sufferings there are from nature sprung,
Ear hath not heard, nor poet's tongue
May venture to declare;
But this as Holy Writ is sure,
"The griefs she bids us here endure
She can herself repair!"

WRITTEN ON THE BANKS OF WASTWATER, DURING A STORM.

THERE is a lake hid far among the hills,
That raves around the throne of solitude,
Not fed by gentle streams, or playful rills,
But headlong cataract and rushing flood.
There, gleam no lovely hues of hanging wood,
No spot of sunshine lights her sullen side;
For horror shaped the wild in wrathful mood,
And o'er the tempest heaved the mountain's pride.
If thou art one, in dark presumption blind,
Who vainly deem'st no spirit like to thine,
That lofty genius deifies thy mind,
Fall prostrate here at Nature's stormy shrine,
And as the thunderous scene disturbs thy heart,
Lift thy changed eye, and own how low thou art.

WRITTEN ON THE BANKS OF WASTWATER, DURING A CALM.

Is this the lake, the cradle of the storms,
Where silence never tames the mountain-roar,
Where poets fear their self-created forms,
Or, sunk in trance severe, their God adore?
Is this the lake, for ever dark and loud
With wave and tempest, cataract and cloud?
Wondrous, O Nature! is thy sovereign power,
That gives to horror hours of peaceful mirth;
For here might beauty build her summer-bower!
Lo! where yon rainbow spans the smiling earth,
And, clothed in glory, through a silent shower
The mighty Sun comes forth, a godlike birth;
While, 'neath his loving eye, the gentle Lake
Lies like a sleeping child too blest to wake!

WRITTEN AT MIDNIGHT, ON HELM-CRAG.

Go up among the mountains, when the storm
Of midnight howls, but go in that wild mood,
When the soul loves tumultuous solitude,
And through the haunted air, each giant form
Of swinging pine, black rock, or ghostly cloud,
That veils some fearful cataract tumbling loud,
Seems to thy breathless heart with life imbued.
'Mid those gaunt, shapeless things thou art alone!
The mind exists, thinks, trembles through the ear,
The memory of the human world is gone,
And time and space seem living only *here*.
Oh! worship thou the visions then made known,
While sable glooms round Nature's temple roll,
And her dread anthem peals into thy soul.

THE VOICE OF THE MOUNTAINS.

LIST! while I tell what forms the mountain's voice!
—The storms are up; and from yon sable cloud
Down rush the rains; while 'mid the thunder loud
The viewless eagles in wild screams rejoice.
The echoes answer to the unearthly noise
Of hurling rocks, that, plunged into the Lake,
Send up a sullen groan: from clefts and caves,
As of half-murdered wretch, hark! yells awake,
Or red-eyed frenzy as in chains he raves.
These form the mountain's voice; these, heard at night,
Distant from human being's known abode,
To earth some spirits bow in cold affright,
But some they lift to glory and to God.

THE EVENING-CLOUD.

A CLOUD lay cradled near the setting sun,
A gleam of crimson tinged its braided snow:
Long had I watched the glory moving on
O'er the still radiance of the Lake below.
Tranquil its spirit seemed, and floated slow!
Even in its very motion there was rest:
While every breath of eve that chanced to blow,
Wafted the traveller to the beauteous West.
Emblem, methought, of the departed soul!
To whose white robe the gleam of bliss is given;
And by the breath of mercy made to roll
Right onwards to the golden gates of Heaven,
Where, to the eye of Faith, it peaceful lies,
And tells to man his glorious destinies.

WRITTEN ON THE SABBATH-DAY.

WHEN by God's inward light, a happy child,
I walked in joy, as in the open air,
It seemed to my young thought the Sabbath smiled
With glory and with love. So still, so fair,
The Heavens looked ever on that hallowed morn,
That, without aid of memory, something there
Had surely told me of its glad return.
How did my little heart at evening burn,
When, fondly seated on my father's knee,
Taught by the lip of love, I breathed the prayer,
Warm from the fount of infant piety!
Much is my spirit changed; for years have brought
Intenser feeling and expanded thought;
—Yet, must I envy every child I see!

WRITTEN ON SKIDDAW, DURING A TEMPEST.

It was a dreadful day, when late I passed
O'er thy dim vastness, Skiddaw !—Mist and cloud
Each subject Fell obscured, and rushing blast
To thee made darling music, wild and loud,
Thou Mountain-Monarch ! Rain in torrents played,
As when at sea a wave is borne to Heaven,
A watery spire, then on the crew dismayed
Of reeling ship with downward wrath is driven.
I could have thought that every living form
Had fled, or perished in that savage storm,
So desolate the day. To me were given
Peace, calmness, joy : then, to myself I said,
Can grief, time, chance, or elements control
Man's chartered pride, the Liberty of Soul ?

I wandered lonely, like a pilgrim sad,
O'er mountains known but to the eagle's gaze ;
Yet, my hushed heart, with Nature's beauty glad,
Slept in the shade, or gloried in the blaze.
Romantic vales stole winding to my eye
In gradual loveliness, like rising dreams ;
Fair, nameless tarns, that seem to blend with sky
Rocks of wild majesty and elfin streams.
How strange, methought, I should have lived so near,
Nor ever worshipped Nature's altar here !
Strange ! say not so—hid from the world and thee,
Though in the midst of life their spirits move,
Thousands enjoy in holy liberty
The silent Eden of unenvied Love !

WRITTEN ON THE EVENING I HEARD OF THE DEATH OF MY FRIEND, WILLIAM DUNLOP.

A GOLDEN cloud came floating o'er my head,
With kindred glories round the sun to blend!
Though fair the scene, my dreams were of the dead;
—Since dawn of morning I had lost a friend.
I felt as if my sorrow ne'er could end:
A cold, pale phantom on a breathless bed,
The beauty of the crimson west subdued,
And sighs that seemed my very life to rend,
The silent happiness of eve renewed.
Grief, fear, regret, a self-tormenting brood
Dwelt on my spirit, like a ceaseless noise;
But, oh! what tranquil holiness ensued,
When, from that cloud, exclaimed a well-known voice,
—God sent me here, to bid my friend rejoice!

THE Lake lay hid in mist, and to the sand
The little billows hastening silently,
Came sparkling on, in many a gladsome band,
Soon as they touched the shore, all doomed to die!
I gazed upon them with a pensive eye,
For on that dim and melancholy strand,
I saw the image of Man's destiny.
So hurry we, right onwards, thoughtlessly,
Unto the coast of that Eternal Land;
Where, like the worthless billows in their glee,
The first faint touch unable to withstand,
We melt at once into Eternity.
O Thou who weigh'st the waters in thine hand,
My awe-struck Spirit puts her trust in Thee!

LINES

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF

THE REV. JAMES GRAHAME,

AUTHOR OF "THE SABBATH," ETC.

WITH tearless eyes and undisturbèd heart,
O Bard of sinless life and holiest song!
I muse upon thy deathbed and thy grave;
Though round that grave the trodden grass still lies
Besmeared with clay; for many feet were there,
Fast-rooted to the spot, when slowly sank
Thy coffin, GRAHAME! into the quiet cell.
Yet, well I loved thee, even as one might love
An elder brother, imaged in the soul
With solemn features, half-creating awe,
But smiling still with gentleness and peace.
Tears have I shed when thy most mournful voice
Did tremblingly breathe forth that touching air
By Scottish shepherd haply framed of old,
Amid the silence of his pastoral hills,
Weeping the flowers on Flodden-field that died.
Wept too have I, when thou didst simply read
From thine own lays so simply beautiful
Some short pathetic tale of human grief,
Or orison or hymn of deeper love,
That might have won the sceptic's sullen heart
To gradual adoration, and belief
Of Him who died for us upon the Cross.
Yea! oft when thou wert well, and in the calm
Of thy most Christian spirit blessing all
Who looked upon thee, with those gentlest smiles
That never lay on human face but thine;
Even when thy serious eyes were lighted up
With kindling mirth, and from thy lips distilled
Words soft as dew, and cheerful as the dawn,
Then too I could have wept, for on thy face,
Eye, voice, and smile, nor less thy bending frame

By other cause impaired than length of years,
Lay something that still turned the thoughtful heart
To melancholy dreams, dreams of decay,
Of death and burial, and the silent tomb.

And of the tomb thou art an inmate now!
Methinks I see thy name upon the stone
Placed at thy head, and yet my cheeks are dry.
Tears could I give thee, when thou wert alive,
The mournful tears of deep foreboding love
That might not be restrained; but now they seem
Most idle all! thy worldly course is o'er,
And leaves such sweet remembrance in my soul
As some delightful music heard in youth,
Sad, but not painful, even more spirit-like
Than when it murmured through the shades of earth.

Short time wert thou allowed to guide thy flock
Through the green pastures, where in quiet glides
The Siloah of the soul! Scarce was thy voice
Familiar to their hearts, who felt that heaven
Did therein speak, when suddenly it fell
Mute, and for ever. Empty now and still
The holy house which thou didst meekly grace,
When with uplifted hand, and eye devout,
Thy soul was breathed to Jesus, or explained
The words that lead unto eternal life.
From infancy thy heart was vowed to God;
And aye the hope that one day thou might'st keep
A little fold, from all the storms of sin
Safe-sheltered, and by reason of thy prayers
Warmed by the sunshine of approving Heaven,
Upheld thy spirit, destined for a while
To walk far other paths, and with the crowd
Of worldly men to mingle. Yet even then,
Thy life was ever such as well became
One whose pure soul was fixed upon the Cross!
And when with simple fervent eloquence,
Grahame pled the poor man's cause, the listener oft
Thought how becoming would his visage smile
Across the house of God, how beauteously
That man would teach the saving words of Heaven!

How well he taught them, many a one will feel
Unto their dying day; and when they lie

On the grave's brink, unfearing and composed,
Their speechless souls will bless the holy man
Whose voice exhorted, and whose footsteps led
Unto the paths of life; nor sweeter hope,
Next to the gracious look of Christ, have they
Than to behold his face who saved their souls.

But closed on earth thy blessèd ministry!
And while thy native Scotland mourns her son
Untimely reft from her maternal breast,
Weeps the fair Sister-Land, with whom erewhile
The stranger sojourned, stranger but in birth,
For well she loved thee, as thou wert her own.

On a most clear and noiseless Sabbath-night
I heard that thou wert gone, from the soft voice
Of one who knew thee not, but deeply loved
Thy spirit meekly shining in thy song.
At such an hour the death of one like thee
Gave no rude shock, nor by a sudden grief
Destroyed the visions from the starry sky
Then settling in my soul. The moonlight slept
With a diviner sadness on the air;
The tender dimness of the night appeared
Darkening to deeper sorrow, and the voice
Of the far torrent from the silent hills
Flowed, as I listened, like a funeral strain
Breathed by some mourning solitary thing.
Yet Nature in her pensiveness still wore
A blissful smile, as if she sympathised
With those who grieved that her own Bard was dead
And yet was happy that his spirit dwelt
At last within her holiest sanctuary,
'Mid long-expecting angels.

And if e'er
Faith, fearless faith in the eternal bliss
Of a departed brother, may be held
By beings blind as we, that faith should dry
All eyes that weep for GRAHAME; or through their tears
Show where he sits august and beautiful
On the right hand of Jesus, 'mid the saints
Whose glory he on earth so sweetly sang.
No fears have we when some delightful child
Falls from its innocence into the grave!

Soon as we know its little breath is gone,
We see it lying in its Saviour's breast,
A heavenly flower there fed with heavenly dew.
Childlike in all that makes a child so dear
To God and man, and ever consecrates
Its cradle and its grave, my GRAHAME, wert thou!
And hadst thou died upon thy mother's breast
Ere thou couldst lisp her name, more fit for heaven
Thou scarce hadst been, than when thy honoured head
Was laid into the dust, and Scotland wept
O'er hill and valley for her darling Bard.

How beautiful is genius when combined
With holiness! Oh, how divinely sweet
The tones of earthly harp, whose chords are touched
By the soft hand of Piety, and hung
Upon Religion's shrine, there vibrating
With solemn music in the ear of God.
And must the Bard from sacred themes refrain?
Sweet were the hymns in patriarchal days,
That, kneeling in the silence of his tent,
Or on some moonlight hill, the shepherd poured
Unto his heavenly Father. Strains survive
Erst chanted to the lyre of Israel,
More touching far than ever poet breathed
Amid the Grecian Isles, or later times
Have heard in Albion, land of every lay.
Why therefore are ye silent, ye who know
The trance of adoration, and behold
Upon your bended knees the throne of Heaven,
And him who sits thereon? Believe it not,
That Poetry, in purer days the nurse,
Yea! parent oft of blissful piety,
Should silent keep from service of her God,
Nor with her summons, loud but silver-toned,
Startle the guilty dreamer from his sleep,
Bidding him gaze with rapture or with dread
On regions where the sky for ever lies
Bright as the sun himself, and trembling all
With ravishing music, or where darkness broods
O'er ghastly shapes, and sounds not to be borne.

Such glory, GRAHAME! is thine: Thou didst despise
To win the ear of this degenerate age
By gorgeous epithets, all idly heaped

On theme of earthly state, or, idler still,
By tinkling measures and unchastened lays,
Warbled to pleasure and her syren-train,
Profaning the best name of poesy.
With loftier aspirations, and an aim
More worthy man's immortal nature, Thou
That holiest spirit that still loves to dwell
In the upright heart and pure, at noon of night
Didst fervently invoke, and, led by her
Above the Aonian mount, sent from the stars
Of heaven such soul-subduing melody
As Bethlehem-shepherds heard when Christ was born.

It is the Sabbath-day : Creation sleeps
Cradled within the arms of heavenly love !
The mystic day, when from the vanquished grave
The world's Redeemer rose, and hailed the light
Of God's forgiving smile. Obscured and pale
Were then the plumes of prostrate seraphim,
Then hushed the universe her sphere-born strain,
When from His throne, Paternal Deity
Declared the Saviour not in vain had shed
His martyred glory round the accursèd Cross,
That fallen man might sit in Paradise,
And earth to heaven ascend in jubilee.
O blessèd day, by God and man beloved !
With more surpassing glory breaks thy dawn
Upon my soul, remembering the sweet hymns
That he, whom nations ever more shall name
The Sabbath-Bard, in gratulation high
Breathed forth to thee, as from the golden urn
That holds the incense of immortal song.

That Poem, so divinely melancholy
Throughout its reigning spirit, yet withal
Bathing in hues of winning gentleness
The pure religion that alone can save,
Full many a wanderer to the paths of peace
Ere now hath made return, and he who framed
Its hallowed numbers, in the realms of bliss
Hath met and known the smiles of seraph-souls,
By his delightful genius saved from death.
Oft when the soul is lost in thoughtless guilt,
And seeming deaf unto the still small voice
Of conscience and of God, some simple phrase

Of beauty or sublimity will break
The spell that linked us to the bands of sin,
And all at once, as waking from a dream,
We shudder at the past, and bless the light
That breaks upon us like the new-born day.
Even so it fares with them, who to this world
Have yielded up their spirits, and, impure
In thought and act, have lived without a sense
Of God, who counts the beatings of their hearts.
But men there are of a sublimer mould,
Who, dedicate with no unworthy zeal
To human Science, up the toilsome steep
Where she in darkness dwells, with pilgrim-feet
By night and day unwearied strive to climb,
Pride their conductor, glory their reward.
Too oft, alas! even in the search of truth
They pass her on the way, although she speak
With loving voice, and cast on them her eyes
So beautifully innocent and pure.
To such, O GRAHAME! thy voice cries from the tomb
Thy worth they loved, thy talents they admired,
And when they think how peaceful was thy life,
Thy death far more than peaceful, though thou sought'st,
Above all other knowledge, that of God
And His redeeming Son; when o'er the page
Where thy mild soul for ever sits enshrined,
They hang with softened hearts, faith may descend
Upon them as they muse, or hope that leads
The way to faith, even as the morning-star
Shines brightly, heralding approaching day.

But happier visions still now bless my soul.
While lonely wandering o'er the hills and dales
Of my dear native country, with such love
As they may guess, who, from their father's home
Sojourning long and far, fall down and kiss
The grass and flowers of Scotland, in I go,
Not doubting a warm welcome from the eyes
Of woman, man, and child, into a cot
Upon a green hill-side, and almost touched
By its own nameless stream that bathes the roots
Of the old ash tree swinging o'er the roof.
Most pleasant, GRAHAME! unto thine eye and heart
Such humble home! there often hast thou sat
'Mid the glad family listening to thy voice

So silently, the ear might then have caught
Without the rustle of the falling leaf.
And who so sweetly ever sang as thou,
The joys and sorrows of the poor man's life?
Not fancifully drawn, that one might weep,
Or smile, he knew not why, but with the hues
Of truth all brightly glistening, to the heart
Cheering, as earth's soft verdure to the eye,
Yet still and mournful as the evening light.
More powerful in the sanctity of death,
There reigns thy spirit over those it loved!
Some chosen books by pious men composed,
Kept from the dust, in every cottage lie
Through the wild loneliness of Scotia's vales,
Beside the Bible, by whose well-known truths
All human thoughts are by the peasant tried.
O blessèd privilege of Nature's Bard!
To cheer the house of virtuous poverty,
With gleams of light more beautiful than oft
Play o'er the splendours of the palace wall.
Methinks I see a fair and lovely child
Sitting composed upon his mother's knee,
And reading with a low and lisping voice
Some passage from the Sabbath, while the tears
Stand in his little eyes so softly blue,
Till, quite o'ercome with pity, his white arms
He twines around her neck, and hides his sighs
Most infantine, within her gladdened breast,
Like a sweet lamb, half sportive, half afraid,
Nestling one moment 'neath its bleating dam.
And now the happy mother kisses oft
The tender-hearted child, lays down the book,
And asks him if he doth remember still
The stranger who once gave him, long ago,
A parting kiss, and blest his laughing eyes!
His sobs speak fond remembrance, and he weeps
To think so kind and good a man should die.

Though dead on earth, yet he from heaven looks down
On thee, sweet child! and others pure like thee!
Made happier, though an angel, by the sight
Of happiness, and virtue by himself
Created or preserved; and oft his soul
Leaves for a while her amaranthine bowers,
And dimly hears the choral symphonies

Of spirits singing round the Saviour's throne,
Delighted with a glimpse of Scotland's vales
Winding round hills where once his pious hymns
Were meditated in his silent heart,
Or with those human beings here beloved,
Whether they smile, as virtue ever smiles,
With sunny countenance gentle and benign,
Or a slight shade of sadness seems to say,
That they are thinking of the sainted soul
That looks from Heaven on them !—

A holy creed
It is, and most delightful unto all
Who feel how deeply human sympathies
Blend with our hopes of heaven, which holds that death
Divideth not, as by a roaring sea,
Departed spirits from this lower sphere.
How could the virtuous even in heaven be blest,
Unless they saw the lovers and the friends,
Whom soon they hope to greet ? A placid lake
Between Time floateth and Eternity,
Across whose sleeping waters murmur oft
The voices of the immortal, hither brought
Soft as the thought of music in the soul.
Deep, deep the love we bear unto the dead !
The adoring reverence that we humbly pay
To one who is a spirit, still partakes
Of that affectionate tenderness we owned
Towards a being, once, perhaps, as frail
And human as ourselves, and in the shape
Celestial, and angelic lineaments,
Shines a fair likeness of the form and face
That won in former days our earthly love.

O GRAHAME ! even I in midnight dreams behold
Thy placid aspect, more serenely fair
Than the sweet moon that calms the autumnal heaven.
Thy voice steals, 'mid the pauses of the wind,
Unto my listening soul more touchingly
Than the pathetic tones of airy harp
That sound at evening like a spirit's song.
Yet, many are there dearer to thy shade,
Yea, dearer far than I ; and when their tears
They dry at last (and wisdom bids them weep,
If long and oft, O sure not bitterly),

Then wilt thou stand before their raptured eyes
As beautiful as kneeling saint e'er deemed
In his bright cell Messiah's visioned form.
I may not think upon her blissful dreams
Who bears thy name on earth, and in it feels
A Christian glory and a pious pride,
That must illume the widow's lonely path
With never-dying sunshine.—To her soul
Soft sound the strains now flowing fast from mine!
And in those tranquil hours when she withdraws
From loftier consolations, may the tears
(For tears will fall, most idle though they be),
Now shed by me to her but little known,
Yield comfort to her, as a certain pledge
That many a one, though silent and unseen,
Thinks of her and the children at her knees,
Blest for the father's and the husband's sake.

TROUTBECK CHAPEL.

How sweet and solemn at the close of day,
After a long and lonely pilgrimage
Among the mountains, where our spirits held
With wildering fancy and her kindred powers
High converse, to descend as from the clouds
Into a quiet valley, filled with trees
By Nature planted, crowding round the brink
Of an oft-hidden rivulet, or hung
A beauteous shelter o'er the humble roof
Of many a moss-grown cottage!

In that hour
Of pensive happiness, the wandering man
Looks for some spot of still profounder rest,
Where nought may break the solemn images
Sent by the setting sun into his soul.
Up to yon simple edifice he walks,
That seems beneath its sable grove of pines
More silent than the home where living thing
Abides, yea, even than desolated tower
Wrapt in its ivy-shroud.

I know it well,
The Village-Chapel! Many a year ago,
That little dome to God was dedicate;
And ever since, hath undisturbèd peace
Sat on it, moveless as the brooding dove
That must not leave her nest. A mossy wall,
Bathed though in ruins with a flush of flowers,
(A lovely emblem of that promised life
That springs from death), doth placidly enclose
The bed of rest, where with their fathers sleep
The children of the vale, and the calm stream
That murmurs onward with the self-same tone

For ever, by the mystic power of sound
Binding the present with the past, pervades
The holy hush as if with God's own voice,
Filling the listening heart with piety.

Oh! ne'er shall I forget the hour, when first
Thy little chapel stole upon my heart,
Secluded TROUTBECK! 'Twas the Sabbath-morn,
And up the rocky banks of thy wild stream
I wound my path, full oft I ween delayed
By sounding waterfall, that 'mid the calm
Awoke such solemn thoughts as suited well
The day of peace; till all at once I came
Out of the shady glen, and with fresh joy
Walked on encircled by green pastoral hills.
Before me suddenly thy Chapel rose
As if it were an image: even then
The noise of thunder rolled along the sky,
And darkness veiled the heights,—a summer-storm
Of short forewarning and of transient power.
Ah me! how beautifully silent thou
Didst smile amid the tempest! O'er thy roof
Arched a fair rainbow, that to me appeared
A holy shelter to thee in the storm,
And made thee shine amid the brooding gloom,
Bright as the morning star. Between the fits
Of the loud thunder rose the voice of Psalms,
A most soul-moving sound. There unappalled,
A choir of youths and maidens hymned their God,
With tones that robbed the thunder of its dread,
Bidding it rave in vain.

Out came the sun
In glory from his clouded tabernacle;
And, wakened by the splendour, up the lark
Rose with a loud and yet a louder song,
Chaunting to heaven the hymn of gratitude.
The service closed; and o'er the churchyard spread
The happy flock who in that peaceful fold
Had worshipped Jesus, carrying to their homes
The comfort of a faith that cannot die,
That to the young supplies a guiding light
Steadier than reason's, and far brighter too,
And to the aged sanctifies the grass
That grows upon the grave.

O happy lot,
Methought, to tend a little flock like this,
Loving them all, and by them all beloved!
So felt their shepherd on that Sabbath-morn
Returning their kind smiles;—a pious man,
Content in this lone vale to teach the truths
Our Saviour taught, nor wishing other praise
Than of his great task-master. Yet his youth
Not unadorned with science, nor the lore
Becoming in their prime accomplished men,
Told that among the worldly eminent
Might lie his shining way:—but, wiser far,
He to the shades of solitude retired,
The birthplace of his fathers, and there vowed
His talents and his virtues, rarest both,
To God who gave them, rendering by his voice
This beauteous Chapel still more beautiful,
And the blameless dwellers in this quiet dale
Happier in life and death.

A CHURCHYARD DREAM.

Methought that in a Burial-ground
One still, sad vernal day,
Upon a little daisied mound
I in a slumber lay ;
While faintly through my dream I heard
The hymning of that holy bird,
Who with more gushing rapture sings
The higher up in Heaven float his unwearied
wings !

In that my mournful reverie,
Such song of heavenly birth
The voice seemed of a soul set free
From this imprisoning earth ;
Higher and higher still it soared,
A holy anthem that adored,
Till vanished song and singer blest
In the blue depths of everlasting rest.

Just then a Child in sportive glee
Came gliding o'er the graves,
Like a lone bird that on the sea
Floats dallying with the waves ;
Upon the vernal flowers awhile
She poured the beauty of her smile,
Then laid her bright cheek on the sod,
And, overpowered with joy, slept in the eye of
God.

The flowers that shine all round her head
May well be breathing sweet,
For flowers are they that Spring hath shed
To deck her winding-sheet ;
And well the tenderest gleams may fall
Of sunshine on that hillock small

On which she sleeps, for they have smiled
O'er the predestined grave of that unconscious
Child.

In bridal garments, white as snow,
A solitary Maid
Doth meekly bring a sunny glow
Into that solemn shade.
A Churchyard seems a joyful place
In the visit of so sweet a face;
A soul is in that deep blue eye
Too good to live on earth—too beautiful to die.

But Death behind a marble Tomb
Looks out upon his prey,
And smiles to know that heavenly bloom
Is yet of earthly clay.
Far off I hear a wailing wide,
And, while I gaze upon that Bride,
A silent Wraith before me stands,
And points unto a grave with cold, pale, claspèd
hands.

A Matron beautiful and bright,
As is the silver Moon
Whose lustre tames the sparkling light
Of the starry eyes of June,
Is shining o'er the Churchyard lone,
While circling her as in a zone,
Delighted dance five Cherubs fair,
And round their native urn shake wide their
golden hair.

O Children they are holy things,
In sight of Earth and Heaven!
An Angel shields with guardian wings,
The home where they are given.
Strong power there is in children's tears,
And stronger in their lispèd prayers—
But the vulture stoops down from above,
And, 'mid her orphan brood, bears off the Parent
Dove.

The young—the youthful—the mature
Have smiled and all past by,

As if nought lovely could endure
Beneath the envious sky;
While bowed with age and age's woes,
Still near—yet still far off the close
Of weary life, yon aged Crone
Can scarce with blind eyes find her Husband's
funeral-stone.

All dead the joyous, bright, and free,
To whom this life was dear!—
The green leaves shivered from the tree
And dangling left the sere!
O dim wild world!—but from the sky
Down came the glad Lark waveringly,
And startled by his liquid mirth
I rose to walk in Faith the darkling paths of
Earth.

THE MAGIC MIRROR.

Methought beneath a Castle huge I stood,
That seemed to grow out of a rock sublime,
Through the dominion of its solitude
Augustly frowning at the rage of Time.
Its lofty minarets, indistinct and dim,
Looked through the brooding clouds; and as a smile
Of passing sunlight showed these structures grim
Burning like fire, I could have thought the while
That they were warriors keeping watch on high,
All motionless, and sheathed in radiant panoply.

What mortal feet these rampart-heights might scale!
Lo! like black atoms mingling in the sky
The far-off rooks and their fleet shadows sail;
Scarce hears the soul their melancholy cry.
What lovely colours bathed the frowning brow
Of that imperial mansion! Radiant green,
And purple fading in a yellow glow!
Oh! lovelier ne'er on mossy bank was seen
In vernal joy; while bands of chartered flowers
Revelled like fairy sprites along their palace towers.

Down sank the drawbridge with a thundering shock;
And in an instant, ere the eye could know,
Bound the stern castle to the opposing rock,
And hung in calmness o'er the flood below;—
A roaring flood, that, born amid the hills,
Forced his lone path through many a darksome glen,
Till, joined by all his tributary rills,
From lake and tarn, from marish and from fen,
He left his empire with a kingly glee,
And fiercely bade recoil the billows of the sea.

I felt it was a dream; nor wished to wake:
Though dim and pale by fits the vision grew;

And oft that ocean dwindled to a lake,
  And cliff and castle from the clouds withdrew.
Oft, all I heard was but a gentle swell,
  Like the wild music of the summer leaves;
Till, like an army mustering in the dell,
  The blasts came rushing from their pine-clad caves,
And swept the silence of the scene away,
Even like a city stormed upon the Sabbath-day.*

Though strange my dream, I knew the Scottish strand,
  And the bold Firth that rolling fiercely bright
Far-distant faded 'mid that mountain land,
  As 'mid dark clouds a sudden shower of light.
Long have my lips been mute in Scotland's praise!
  Now is the hour for inspiration's song!
The shadowy glories of departed days
  Before my trancèd soul in tumult throng,
And I, with fearless voice, on them will call,
From camp and battle-field, from princely bower and hall.

With only my still shadow by my side,
  And Nature's lifeless things that slept around,
I seemed to be! when, from the portal wide,
  Startling as sudden light, or wandering sound,
Onwards a figure came, with stately brow,
  And as he glanced upon the ruined pile
A look of regal pride, "Say, who art thou,
  (His countenance brightening with a scornful smile,
He sternly cried), whose footsteps rash profane
The wild romantic realm where I have willed to reign?"

But ere to these proud words I could reply,
  How changed that scornful face to soft and mild;
A witching frenzy glittered in his eye,
  Harmless, withal, as that of playful child.
And when once more the gracious vision spoke,
  I felt the voice familiar to mine ear;
While many a faded dream of earth awoke
  Connected strangely with that unknown Seer,
Who now stretched forth his arm, and on the sand
A circle round me traced, as with Magician's wand.

Desire or power then had I none to move,
  In that sweet prison a delighted thrall;

* The image in this line is from a poem of Mr Coleridge.

Died all remembrances of daily love,
Or, if they glimmered, vain I held them all.
Alone on that Magician could I gaze ;
His voice alone compelled was I to hear,
Wild as the autumnal wind that fitful plays
A wailing dirge unto the dying year,
Amid the silence of the midnight hour,
Moaned through the ivied window of a mouldering tower.

He felt his might, and sported with my soul,
Even as the sea-wind dallies with a boat
That now doth fleeter than the billows roll,
Now, as at anchor, on the calm doth float.
Nor heeded he to see my senses locked
In the dim maze of wildering fantasy ;
But ever and anon my wonder mocked
With careless looks of gentle tyranny.
Well-used was that Magician to the sight
Of souls by him subdued to terror and delight.

How bold the fearful oft in dreams become !
Familiar in the midst of all things strange !
Unshuddering then, with spirits will we roam,
Calm and unconscious of the unearthly change !
Even so it fared with me ; ere long I grew
Familiar with the wizard of my dream,
When from his lofty breast he slowly drew
What seemed a mirror by its glancing gleam,
And bade me therein look, where I might see
Wild sights come floating by in clouds of glamoury.

Then burned that glass insufferably bright,
Till closed my eyelids with the sudden pain ;
As when the downward rays of mid-day light
Kindle to fire upon the verdant main.
Ne'er diamond spark outshone the common air
With purer radiance, nor the setting sun
Streamed on the window of cathedral fair
A deeper blaze, to tell his course was run :
I gazed again ; and lo ! that Mirror soon
With tenderest lustre smiled, like a September moon.

Unto another world it opening gave.
There, castles stood majestic in their prime,

And mailèd chieftains, rising from the grave,
Their banners hung o'er battlements sublime.
Oft changed the magic scene; here Lady bright,
In hazel grove, beneath the western star,*
Listened the love tale of her faithful Knight;
Here the red beacon blazed, and to the war
Fierce clans come rushing, while the blaze illumes
Targe, spear, and battle-axe, and widely-tossing plumes.

How sweet the moon on yon fair Abbey shone! †
Bathing in liquid light so sadly faint
The flowerets drooping pale in sculptured stone,
And the still image of each mouldering saint.
And what may bring a Warrior's crested head ‡
Unto these holy courts and cloisters dim?
Thou daring spirit, why disturb the dead?
Yawns the damp tomb, and lo! a spectre grim,§
Yet with his dead face beautiful withal,
Lies 'mid immortal light that fills the vaulted hall.

The Abbey melted like a cloud away,
And many a gorgeous pageant charmed my heart:
But how may I recount in feeble lay
The beauteous marvels of that wizard's art?
No! not unto myself dare I to tell
What various visions o'er that Mirror rolled,
Till viewed my softened soul a lovely dell,
Where upon Yarrow's banks a Minstrel old ||
Did sit, and wake to lords and ladies high
The last expiring strains of Border Minstrelsy.

Gone was the Magic Glass! I looked around;
There hung the castle, like a thunder-cloud
Above the darkened sea whose hollow sound
Subdued my spirit more than tempest loud;
And by my side, upon that solemn shore,
That Wizard strange did like an Image stand,
Watching the working of the ancient lore
That o'er the glass had passed at his command:
And when he saw me lost in wild surprise,
Once more he flashed its light upon my startled eyes.

* The meeting of Margaret and Cranstoun, in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*.
† Melrose.
‡ Deloraine.
§ Michael Scott.
|| Conclusion of the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*.

Ye lesser glories, in my spirit sleep!
  But proudly fling thy white arms to the sea,
Queen of the unconquered North! * lo! yonder deep,
  With all his subject waves, doth worship thee!
Stately thou sittest on thy mountain throne,
  Thy towers and temples like a cloudy sky;
And scarce canst tell what fabrics are thine own,
  Hung 'mid the air-built phantoms floating by.
Oh! ne'er may that bright diadem be shorn,
By thee, for many an age, majestically worn!

Nor dim and silent were thy regal halls
  (The mansion, now, of grief and solitude!)
But mirth and music shook thy pictured walls,
  And Scotland's monarch reigned in Holy-Rood.
Well did I know, 'mid banneret and peer,
  Star of the Stuart-line, accomplished James!
His graceful words I almost seemed to hear,
  As, lightly ranging 'mid those high-born dames,
To each, in turn, some gallant wish he sighed,
But lingered still near one,† his ruin and his pride!

Thou field of carnage! silent be thy name!
  Where Scotland's royal standard sank in blood;
While round their monarch, like a guardian flame
  Wasted in vain, his dying nobles stood.
Gladly I saw dark clouds in tumult pass
  O'er that red sea of horror and despair;
And the last image in the Magic Glass,
  Even like the seraph Mercy, saintly fair,
Over her wounded foe hung sorrowing,‡
And slaked his burning thirst with water from the spring.

"Dry up those tears," the gentle wizard cried,
  "Nor weep while nature in her glory smiles!"—
And lo! with sylvan mountains beautified,
  Incumbent cliffs, lone bays, and fairy isles,
Floated a lake § that I could scarce behold,
  So bright it gleamed with its enchanted waves!
While ever and anon wild music rolled
  From fractured rocks, and undiscovered caves,

* See the description of Edinburgh in *Marmion*.
† Dame Heron. ‡ Clara and Marmion.
§ Loch Catrine.

As if some spirit warbled from the steep
A low unearthly song, to charm the lake to sleep.

A spirit !—lo ! her fairy vessel glides
Round the green edge of yonder oaken brake !
Before its prow the sparkling wave divides
In homage to the Lady of the Lake.
While, gazing from the shore, an armèd Knight *
Holds distant parley with that unknown Queen,
Whose eyes, with fear and wonder, glistening bright,
Lend a new wildness to the mountain scene !
O lovelier far, in that bewildered trance,
Than Lady of the Mere,† by shores of old romance !

Wild rose her palace, 'mid the unbroken calm,
Burning with flowers, that like a wreath of light
Girdled the living dome, and breathing balm
Sweet to the soul as all those hues so bright !
The work of human hands it may not be,
And unto dreams of fairy power gave birth ;
Yet, 'mid such dreams, the spirit paused to see
Some dim-discovered traces of this earth,
While on that lady's countenance divine
A pensive shadow lay, that told her mortal line.

Yea ! worldly cares to that enchanted dome,
Despite of Nature's guardian power, intrude ;
Though bathed in sunshine, yet a stormy gloom
Is gathering o'er the hermit solitude.
In evil hour yon princely stranger came !
For ambushed foemen glare from every dell :—
Clan-Alpin hath beheld the Cross of Flame,
The sign of war her children love so well ;
And all her heathery mountains teem with life,
With warriors gaunt and grim, and armed for mortal strife.

Lake, rock, and mountain, cataract and flood,
Mine eyes behold no more ; with eager breath,
I gaze on clashing falchions dimmed with blood,
And plumèd helms that seem to frown with death.
One of those shapes so beautiful and brave,
Like oak-tree sternly bending to the blast,

* Fitz-James. † See Wordsworth's Poems.

Must fall this day—but proud shall be his grave!
In wrath life's bootless energy hath past!—
Fallen is the eagle that so strongly flew—
Long Celtic bards shall wail the dirge of Roderick Dhu.

Oh! not by vulgar arm was Roderick slain!
Less than a king the victor may not be:
See! how his war-steed bears him o'er the plain,
How nods his crest with regal majesty!
Strevlina's gate may bow her lofty head
To kiss the plume that mocked each hostile sword,
Nor by such homage be dishonourèd:
Methinks, in his disguise, she knows her lord,
As if beneath her arch King James did ride,
With all his unhelmed peerage by his gracious side.

By kingly acts a king should aye be known!
Then look through yonder lustre-beaming hall:
Stately the figures there,—yea! every one!
But Scotland's monarch far outshines them all.
And is she here, the Lady of the Lake?
Hush thy quick-beating heart, thou trembling thing!
And let him smile who suffers for thy sake.*
On your betrothèd arms the golden ring
The Knight of Snowdoun's kingly hands impose,
A talisman that breaks the spell of all your woes.

The wizard's voice here touched upon my heart,
And quick I waked, like one who, scarce asleep,
Springs from his slumber with a sudden start
To shun some yawning gulf, or headlong steep.
"Thou lov'st," said he, "on warlike pomp to gaze;
'Tis a true Scottish pride—look here again,
And dream no more of deeds of other days."—
Glad I obeyed,—and lo! the shores of Spain†
Rose beautifully terrible like heaven,
When all its lowering clouds in wrathful hosts are driven.

Woe to yon Tyrant! to his legions woe!
Joy to the vulture on his herdless rock!
Glad would ye be to hear the Ebro flow
Once more, and leave the shepherd with his flock,

* Græme. † Don Roderick.

Ye savage slaves, that shame the name of France!
But ne'er that sound of safety must ye hear.
List ye that tread!—the red-cross ranks advance!
Vain valour's stand, and vain the flight of fear,
For who shall live, when, shouting in their joy,
The British brother-bands move onwards to destroy?

Wasted on air were these warm words of mine—
The wizard and his Magic Glass were fled;
The solemn hush, that speaks the day's decline,
Across the sea without a wave was shed.
The rooks had ceased their cawing in the sky,
Nor hummed the wild-bee on the wall-flower bright
That on the old tower bloomed luxuriantly;
Then rose the lovely Star that brings the night,
Till Luna entered on her placid reign,
And a sweet crescent smiled, reflected from the main.

THE CHILDREN'S DANCE.

How calm and beautiful the frosty night
Has stolen unnoticed like the hush of sleep
O'er Grassmere-vale! Beneath the mellowing light
How sinks in softness every rugged steep!
The old church-tower a solemn watch doth keep
O'er the sweet village she adorns so well;
Faintly the freezing stream is heard to weep,
Wild-murmuring far within its icy cell,
And hark! across the lake, clear chimes the chapel-bell.

Soon will the moon and all her stars be here:
A stealing light proclaims her o'er yon hill.
Slowly she raiseth up her radiant sphere,
And stillness, at her smile, becomes more still.
My heart forgets all thoughts of human ill,
And man seems happy as his place of birth:
All things that yield him joy my spirit fill
With kindred joy; and even his humblest mirth
Seems at this peaceful hour to beautify the earth.

Beyond this vale my fancy may not fly,
Held by its circle in a magic chain;
Of merry-making, and festivity
Even 'mid this moonlight-scene shall be my strain.
Nor, gracious Nature! when I wake again
A hymn of loftier temper in thy praise,
Wilt thou the Poet's homage-song disdain,
For thou hast never listened to his lays,
Who loved not lowly life and all its simple ways.

Through many a vale how rang each snow-roofed cot,
This livelong day with rapture blithe and wild!
All thoughts but of the lingering eve forgot
Both by grave parent, and light-hearted child.
Hail to the night! whose image oft beguiled

Youth's transient sadness with a startling cheer!
The *Ball-night* this by younkers proudly styled!
The joy at distance bright burns brighter near—
Now smiles the happiest hour of all their happy year!

All day the earthen floors have felt their feet
Twinkling quick measures to the liquid sound
Of their own small-piped voices shrilly sweet,
As hand in hand they wheeled their giddy round.
Ne'er fairy-revels on the greensward mound
To dreaming bard a lovelier show displayed,
Titania's self did ne'er with lighter bound
Dance o'er the diamonds of the dewy glade,
Than danced, at peep of morn, mine own dear mountain-maid.

Oft in her own small mirror had the gleam,
The softened gleam of her rich golden hair,
That o'er her white neck floated in a stream,
Kindled to smiles that infant's visage fair,
Half-conscious she that beauty glistened there!
Oft had she glanced her restless eyes aside
On silken sash so bright and debonnair,
Then to her mother flown with leaf-like glide,
Who kissed her cherub-head with tears of silent pride.

But all these glad rehearsals now are o'er,
And young and old in many a glittering throng
By tinkling copsewood and hill-pathway pour,
Cheering the air with laughter and with song,
Those first arrived think others tarrying long,
And chide them smiling with a friendly jeer,
"To let the music waste itself was wrong,
So stirringly it strikes upon the ear,
The lame might dance," they cry, "the aged-deaf might hear."

And lo! the crowded ball-room is alive
With restless motion, and a humming noise,
Like on a warm spring-morn a sunny hive,
When round their queen the waking bees rejoice.
Sweet blends with graver tones the silvery voice
Of children rushing eager to their seats;
The Master proud of his fair flock employs
His guiding beck that due attention meets,—
List! through the silent room each anxious bosom beats!

Most beautiful and touching is the scene!
More blissful far to me than Fancy's bower!
Arched are the walls with wreaths of holly green,
Whose dark red-berries blush beside the flower
That kindly comes to charm the wintry hour,
The Christmas rose! the glory white as snow!
The dusky roof seems brightened by the power
Of bloom and verdure mingling thus below,
Whence many a taper-light sends forth a cheerful glow.

There sit together tranquilly arrayed
The friends and parents of the infant-band;
A mother nodding to her timid maid
With cheering smiles—or beckoning with her hand,
A sign of love the child doth understand.
There, deeper thoughts the father's heart employ,
His features grave with fondness melting-bland,
He asks his silent heart, with gushing joy,
If all the vale can match his own exulting boy.

See! where in blooming rows the children sit!
All loving partners by the idle floor
As yet divided—save where boy doth flit,
Lightly as small wave running 'long the shore,
To whisper something, haply said before,
Unto the soft cheek of his laughing May!
The whiles the master eyes the opening door,
And, fearing longer than one smile to stay,
Turns on his noiseless heel, and jocund wheels away.

O band of living flowers! O taintless wreath!
By nature nourished 'mid her mountain air!
O sweet unfolding buds that blush and breathe
Of innocence and love! I scarce may dare
To gaze upon you!—What soft gleams of hair!
What peaceful foreheads! and what heavenly eyes!
Bosoms so sweet will never harbour care;
Such spiritual breath was never made for sighs!
For you still breathe on earth the gales of paradise.

But I will call you by your human name,—
Children of earth, of frailty, and distress!
Alternate objects ye of praise and blame!
The spell is broken—do I love you less?
Ah! no!—a deepening, mournful tenderness

Yearns at my heart, e'en now when I behold
What trivial joys the human soul can bless!
I feel a pathos that can ne'er be told
Breathed from yon mortal locks of pure ethereal gold.

Where now that angel face—that fairy frame—
The joyful beauty of that burnished head
That shining forth o'er all—a starlike flame—
Once through this room admiring rapture shed?
Can that fair breast so full of life be dead?
All mute those ruddy lips whose dewy balm
As if through breathing flowers sweet music shed?
Those bounding limbs chained now in endless calm—
—For her last Sabbath-day was sung the funeral psalm!

One reverend head I miss amid the throng—
'Tis bowed in sorrow o'er his cottage hearth!
The tread of dancing feet—the voice of song—
The gladsome viol—and the laugh of mirth
To him seem mockery on this lonesome earth.
Rich in one child—he felt as if his store
Of bliss might never yield to mortal dearth;
But dry the cup of joy that once ran o'er!
—Now that grey-headed man is poorest of the poor.

That was a stirring sound—my heart feels light
Once more, and happy as a lamb at play.
At music such as this pale thought takes flight;
It speaks of Scotland too, a dear strathspey!
No vulgar skill the Master doth display,
The living bow leaps dancing o'er the strings,
The wrinkled face of Age is bright as day,
While each glad child in fancied measure springs,
And feels as if through air he skimmed on flying wings.

A hush of admiration chains the breath,
And calms the laughing features of us all;
The room, erewhile so loud, is still as death—
For lo! the Infant-monarchs of the ball
Rise from their seats, rejoicing at the call,
And move soft-gliding to their proper place!
He in his triumph rising straight and tall;
She light of air, and delicate of face,
More bright through fear's faint shade her wild unconscious grace.

Towards each other their delighted eyes
They smiling turn, and all at once may tell
From their subdued and sinless ecstasies
That these fair children love each other well.
They sport and play in the same native dell;
There, each lives happy in a sheltered nest;
And though the children of our vales excel
In touching beauty—far above the rest
Shine forth this starlike pair—the loveliest and the best.

Like a faint shadow falls the pride of youth
O'er faces sparkling yet with childhood's light—
Joy, friendship, fondness, innocence, and truth,
That blushing maiden to her boy unite,
More than a brother dear! Ay—this glad night
Across their quiet souls will often move,
A spot of vernal sunshine ever bright!
When through youth's fairy-land no more they rove,
And feel that Grief oft sits beside her sister Love.

But lo! their graceful salutations lend
A mutual boldness to each beating heart;
Up strikes the tune—suspense is at an end—
Like fearless forest-fawns away they start!
How wildly nature now combines with art!
The motions of the infant mountaineer
Wont o'er the streams and up the hills to dart,
Subdued by precept and by music here
Enthral the admiring soul at once through eye and ear.

Like sunbeams glancing o'er a meadow-field,
From side to side the airy spirits swim.
What keen and kindling rapture shines revealed
Around their eyes, and moves in every limb!
See! how they twine their flexile arms so slim,
In graceful arches o'er their hanging hair,
Whose ringlets for a while their eyes bedim.
The music stops—they stand like statues there—
Then parting glide away on noiseless steps of air.

And now a ready hand hath round them thrown
A flowing garland, for their beauteous Queen
Wreathed by her playmates—roses newly blown
White-clustering 'mid the ivy's vivid green.
Enfolded thus in innocence, they lean

Their silky heads in inclination dear,
Their blent locks fluttering thro' the space between;
And do they not, advancing thus, appear
Like angels sent by Spring to usher in the year?

Their movements every instant lighter grow.
Motion to them more easy seems than rest:
Their cheeks are tinged with a diviner glow—
Their gleaming looks a perfect bliss attest.
Now is the triumph of their art confest
By rising murmurs, and soft-rustling feet
All round the admiring room—they cease—opprest
With a pride-mingled shame—and to their seat
Fly off, 'mid thundering praise, with bosoms fluttering sweet.

Around their Queen her loving playmates press,
Proud of her dancing, as it were their own;
With voices trembling through their tenderness,
Like to the flute's low tones when sweetly blown!
Envy to their pure breasts is yet unknown;
Too young and happy for a moment's guile!
There Innocence still sacred keeps her throne,
Well-pleased, in that calm hold, to see the while
Lingering on human lips an unpolluted smile.

Ah me! that Bards in many a lovely lay,
Forgetting all their own delightful years,
Should sing that life is but one little day,
And this most blessèd world the vale of tears!
Even in such songs mysterious truth appears:
We weep—forget—or muse resigned on death—
But oh! that those inevitable years
The soul should sully with bedimming breath,
And prove how vain a dream is all our childhood's faith!

Go to thy mother's arms, thou blessèd thing!
And in her yearning bosom hide thy head:
Behold! how bliss resembleth sorrowing!
When smiles are glistening—why should tears be shed?
Nor, grey-haired man! art thou dishonourèd
By those big drops that force at last their way
Down thy grave wrinkled face! When thou art dead,
That child thou knowest will weep upon thy clay—
Thus fathers oft are sad when those they love are gay.

But why should merriment thus feel alloy,
Sanctioned by Nature though such sadness be?
—Look on yon Figure! how he swells with joy!
With head-erecting pride and formal glee!
And may a Poet dare to picture thee,
As stiff thou walk'st thy pupils sly among;
While roguish elf doth ape thy pedantry?
Loudly, I trow, would bark the critic throng,
If vulgar name like thine should slip into my song.

And yet thou shalt not go without the meed
Of well-earned praise—one tributary line:
And haply as I tune my simple reed,
Such theme the pastoral muse may not decline.
Nor vain nor useless is a task like thine—
That, ere the gleams of life's glad morning fly,
Bids native grace with fresh attractions shine,
Taming the wild—emboldening the shy—
And still its end the same—the bliss of infancy!

Nor think the coldest spirit could withstand
The genial influence breathed, like balm from heaven,
From rosy childhood, in a vernal band
Dancing before him every happy Even.
When through the gloom their gliding forms are driven,
Like soft stars hurrying through the airy mist,
Unto his heart paternal dreams are given,
And in the bliss of innocent beauty blest
Oft hath that simple man their burnished ringlets kissed.

No idle, worthless, wandering man is he,
But in this vale of honest parents bred:
Trained to a life of patient industry,
He with the lark in summer leaves his bed
Through the sweet calm by morning twilight shed,
Walking to labour by that cheerful song;
And, making now pure pleasure of a trade,
When winter comes with nights so dark and long,
'Tis his to train to grace the smiling infant throng.

And he, I ween, is aye a welcome guest
In every cottage-home on hill and vale:
And oft by matron grave is warmly prest
To honour with his praise her home-brewed ale.
Smiles the grown maid her master to regale,

Mindful of all his kindness when a child ;
Invited thus, the master may not fail
To laud with fitting phrase the liquor mild,
And prays that heaven may bless the cottage on the wild.

O fair the mazy dance that breaks my dream !
Heaven dawns upon me as I starting wake !
A flight of fancy this—a frolic whim—
A mirthful tumult in which all partake.
So dance the sunny atoms o'er a lake ;
So small clouds blend together in the sky ;
So when the evening gales the grove forsake,
The radiant lime-leaves twinkle yet on high,
So flutter new-fledged birds to their own melody.

Through bright confusion order holds her reign,
And not one infant there but well doth know
By cunning rules her station to regain,
And fearless of mistakes to come and go.
Yet did the master no small pains bestow
On these small elves so docile, and so true
To tune and figure. Nature willed it so,
Who framed to grace their stature as it grew,
And trained their fairy feet among the morning dew.

True that, in polished life, refinement sheds
A fragile elegance o'er childhood's frame,—
And in a trembling lustre steeps their heads,
A finer charm, a grace without a name.
There culture kindly breathes on nature's flame ;
And angel beauty owns her genial sway.
But oh ! too oft doth dove-eyed Pity claim
The unconscious victims dancing light and gay,
For sickness lends that bloom, the symbol of decay.

Here Health, descending from her mountain-throne
Surveys with rapture yon delighted train
Of rosy sprites, by day and night her own,
Though mortal creatures, strangers yet to pain !
For she hath taught them up the hills to strain,
Following her foot-prints o'er the dewy flowers,
Light as the shadows flitting o'er the plain,
Soon as the earth salutes the dawning hours
With song and fragrance poured from all her glittering bowers.

Nor deem to gilded roofs alone confined
The magic charm of manners mild and free;
Attendant mostly they on peace of mind,
Best cherished by the breath of purity.
Yea! oft in scenes like this of rustic glee,
Where youth, and joy, and innocence resort,
The *Manners* gladly rule the revelry,
Unseen, they mingle in the quickening sport,
Well pleased 'mid village-hinds to hold their homely court.

See! with what tenderness of mien, voice, eye,
Yon little stripling, scarce twelve summers old,
Detains his favourite partner gliding by,
Becoming, as she smiles, more gaily bold!
'Tis thus the pleasures of our youth unfold
The fairest feelings of the human heart;
Nor, o'er our heads when silvering years are rolled,
Will the fond image from our fancy part,
But clings tenacious there 'mid passion, pride, and art.

Ay! nights like this are felt o'er many a vale!
Their sweet remembrance mocks the drifted snow
That chokes the cottage up,—it bids the hail
With cheerful pattering 'gainst the panes to blow.
Hence, if the town-bred traveller chance to go
Into the mountain-dwellings of our poor,
The peasants greet with unembarrassed brow
The splendid stranger honouring thus their door,
And lead his steps with grace along the rushy floor.

But now the lights are waxing dim and pale,
And shed a fitful gleaming o'er the room;
'Mid the dim hollies one by one they fail,
Another hour, and all is wrapt in gloom.
And lo! without, the cold bright stars illume
The cloudless air, so beautiful and still,
While proudly placed in her meridian dome
Night's peerless Queen the realms of heaven doth fill
With peace and joy, and smiles on each vast slumbering hill.

The dance and music cease their blended glee,
And many a wearied infant hangs her head,
Dropping asleep upon her mother's knee,
Worn out with joy, and longing for her bed.
Yet some lament the bliss too quickly fled,

And fain the dying revels would prolong—
Loth that the parting "Farewell" should be said,
They round the Master in a circle throng—
Unmoved, alas! he stands their useless prayers among.

And now an old man asks him, ere they go,
If willing he a parting tune to play—
One of those Scottish tunes so sweet and slow!
And proud is he such wishes to obey.
Then "Auld lang syne," the wild and mournful lay
Ne'er breathed through human hearts unmoved by tears,
Wails o'er the strings, and wailing dies away!
While tremblingly his mellow voice he rears,
Ah me! the aged weep to think of former years!

Now rising to depart, each parent pays
Some compliment well-suited to his ear—
Couched, through their warmth of heart, in florid phrase,
Yet, by a parent's honest hopes, sincere!
They trust to meet him all another year,
If gracious heaven to them preserves the boon
Of life and health—and now with tranquil cheer
Their hearts still touched with that delightful tune,
Homeward they wend along beneath the silent moon.

O'er Loughrig-cliffs I see one party climb,
Whose empty dwellings through the hushed midnight
Sleep in the shade of Langdale-pikes sublime—
Up Dummail-Raise, unmindful of the height,
His daughter in his arms, with footsteps light
The father walks, afraid lest she should wake!
Through lonely Easdale past yon cots so white
On Helm-crag side, their journey others take;
And some to those sweet homes that smile by Rydal lake.

He too, the Poet of this humble show,
Silent walks homeward through the hour of rest—
While quiet as the depth of spotless snow,
A pensive calm contentment fills his breast!
O wayward man! were he not truly blest!
That lake so still below—that sky above!
Unto his heart a sinless infant prest,
Whose ringlets like the glittering dew-wire move,
Floating and sinking soft amid the breath of love!

AN EVENING IN FURNESS ABBEY.

An Apparition hung amid the hush
Of the lone vale ; whether exhaled from earth
Or dropt from heaven, as yet my beating heart,
That quaked unto the sudden solitude,
Knew not, nor cared to know—a mist—a cloud—
Material shadow—or a spiritual dream !
Slowly and waveringly it seemed to change
Into a hoary edifice, o'erhung
By hoary trees with mouldering boughs as mute
Even as the mouldering stones—a ghost-like show !
Uncertain in their tremor where to rest,
Like birds disturbed at night, my startled thoughts
Floated around the dim magnificence
Of air-woven roofs, and arches light as air
Spanning the faded sunset, till the pile,
Still undergoing, as my spirit gazed
Intenslier and intenslier through the gloom,
Strange transformation from the beautiful
To the sublime, breathing alternately
Life-kindling hope and death-foretelling fear,
Majestically settled down at last
Into its own religious character,
A House of prayer and penitence—dedicate
Hundreds of years ago to God, and Her
Who bore the Son of Man ! An Abbey fair
As ever lifted reverentially
The solemn quiet of its stately roof
Beneath the moon and stars.

And though that Time
Had hushed the choral anthems, and o'erthrown
The altar, nor the holy crucifix
Spared, whereon hung outstretched in agony
The Eternal's visioned arms, 'twas dedicate
To prayer and penitence still ; so said the hush

Of earth and heaven unto the setting sun,
Speaking, methought, to nightly-wandering man,
With a profounder meaning than the burst
Of hymns in morn or evening orisons
Chanted, within imagination's ear,
By supplicants whose dust hath long been mixed
With that of the hard stones on which they slept,
The cells that heard their penitential prayers,
The cloisters where between the hours of prayer
The brethren walked in whispering solitude,
Or sate, with bent-down head each in his niche
Fixed as stone-image, with his rosary
In pale hands, dropping on each mystic bead
To Mary Mother mild a contrite tear.

Moonless as yet, without one single star,
Lay the blue amplitude of space serene,
Which we in our delight call heaven. No cloud,
Nor thought of cloud, that region all divine
Reposed on or passed by; its holiness
Seemed perfect in its pure simplicity,
Absorbing the whole being like a thought,
Till sky and soul were one. It was that hour
When Gloaming comes on hand-in-hand with Night
Like dark twin-sisters, and the fairer Day
Is loth to disappear; when all three meet,
Gloaming, and Day, and Night, with dewdrops crowned,
And veiled, half-veiled, each with her shadowy hair;
When unseen roses, known but by their balm,
Full-blown or budding, from their humble beds
Breathe incense to those dim divinities
Pleased with the transient scent of transient things,
As heaven still is with earth; when all three meet
In the uncertain dimness of the sky,
Each with a beauty of her own combined
Into harmonious colouring, like a tune
Sung by three angel voices, up in heaven,
Unto the rapt ear of the listening earth.
It was an hour for any hallowed thought
Akin to grief, the highest mood allowed
To mortal creatures, for all happiness
Worthy that holy name seems steeped in tears
Like flowers in dew, or tinged with misty hues
Like stars in halo. Feelings that had slept
For long long years o'erlaid within the soul

By brooding passions, rose again to power,
As sweet as when they first their lustre lent
To life's young morn, that needed in the sky
No sun to light the glorious universe.
As sweet but for a moment—for they die
Away into the melancholy breathed
From a profound conviction conscience-born,
That they no resting place on earth have now,
All phantoms! doomed to glide back to their cells,
And haply there, beyond the reach of day,
To lie for evermore! In such an hour
Some pensive passage in our Book of Life,
Restored to its original characters,
Gleams on our eyes again, until we wish,
In love and pity of the yearned-for dead,
So passionate our desolate spirit's throes,
That we had ne'er been born, or even now
Were with the invisible in weal or woe
To all eternity! How burn our hearts
Within us! while they strive to grasp again
First loves, first friendships from the clutch of death
That will not lose its hold; when brethren blest
Renewed some sacrament of sighs and tears,
Religious far beyond the weight of words,
Voiceless in sanctity! When days divine,
Closing on nights diviner still, bequeathed
New treasures to augment the unhoarded store
Of golden thoughts, and fancies squandered free
As dewdrops by the morn, yet never missed
By the innocent prodigal, who flung them back
Into the lap of Nature showering still
Her orient pearls for his especial joy!
As o'er some chosen vale the rainbow hangs,
Tinging the heavens with beauty, till they sing
A new song to the pathway of the power
Beloved by gods and men, the Spring who comes
To glorify the earth! Of partings then
We do remember us made long ago,
When youthful heads to stern necessity
First bowed astonished,—of embraces torn
Asunder, felt to be embraces still,
Divided though they be by winds and waves,
And isles, and continents, and months, and years,—
Vain barriers to the reaches of our souls,
That in the midst of life's great desert meet

From far, as on two whirlwinds borne, or wings
Stronger than Jove's own birds, the plumes of thought,
Winnowing their way across the wilderness.
Or to strange glamoury, lo! deathbeds spread
Their shroud-like whiteness, and their grave-like calm,
Again before our eyes that may not shun
The mortal vision! There a parent lies,
Unhappy only that no voice is left
To utter benediction on our heads,
Not one small word for all that love so great
That gushes out with the last sob of life,
And leaves us orphans—in our agony
Loading those temples with remorseful love
Whose grey hairs haply when they waved with life
We heeded not, even in the hour of prayer.
Oh! oft on nights so beautiful comes back,
All of her own accord, like some fair bird,
That, flying far away over a wood
Or mountain, seeming to be lost for ever
Among the clouds, in sunshine reappears,
At first a dim speck, soon a shining star,
Till, folding up at once her lovely wings
Into composèd brightness, down she drops
Into her nest, by that sweet singer left
But for one hurried hour of homeless joy!
Oh! oft on nights so beautiful comes back,
All of her own accord, unchanged her eyes,
Seraphic sweetness, and the glow unchanged
Of that refulgent head, which when it rose
Of old before me through the twilight dews,
I felt that the whole region of the heavens
Needed no other star—comes back, God-sent,
From the dim mountain-range beyond the grave,
Whose awful summits, sometimes seen in sleep,
Sublime our dreams beyond the poetry
Of mightiest bards, when chained by fleshy bonds
Within this waking world—comes back from bliss
My holy Orphan! She had heard a voice
Calling upon her, one still Sabbath morn,
When like a lily of the field arrayed
For going to the house of God, to lay
Her Bible down, and come away to heaven!
Even in one hour she died—just as the psalm,
Through which her singing like a silver harp
Was wont to lead the sacred melody,

Came to her ear, across the banks and braes
Of yellow broom in which her father's cot
Nest-like was built ; nor ever mortal eyes
Saw that sweet bird in living beauty more !

How reverend the old Abbey's ivied walls !
How pleasant in their sweet solemnity,
Unto my spirit, long disturbed by grief,
Nor less by joy, now tranquil as the core
Of that hushed chancel, as the inmost heart
Of that night-darkening oak ! Many long years
Since I last visited, then all alone,
The vale of Nightshade. Wandering up and down
Earth's deserts and her Edens—in the flush
Of flowery fields enamelled by the spring
Now forming fancy-garlands—in the gloom
Of forests, where no hermit had his cave,
So sullen that o'ershadowing solitude,
Weaving a net of necromantic dreams—
Now by the shore of some great inland loch,
Or sea-arm tossing white among the hills
To the black thunder-cloud, sole sitting there
So motionless the long-winged heron swayed
His flight not from the stone of which I seemed
A part, incorporated with the dash
Of howling waves, and savage blasts that shook
The avalanche from the cliff, descending swift
Down to the glen, as the scared eagle soared
Up into heaven ! Now down the broomy burn
That wimpled on round gardened villages,
Angling along, attended by a group
Of eager children, their short sunny hour
Of mid-day play devouring ; then away,
Each with his scaly treasure held aloft,
Shouting out praises of the stranger's skill
And bounty—lavish of the silver fry.
Now by some moorland stream-fount welling out
A sheep-surrounded circle of bright green,
That would have shamed the emerald, 'neath a rock
Fern-feathered, and with white-stemmed birch tree
crowned,
Lying remote above the hum of man,
With face up to the sky, nor wanting food
For meditation, while one single cloud
Came journeying from afar, or Beauty breathed

Upon the braided sky most delicate
A fleecy whiteness that subdued the blue
To cloudy character without a cloud!

Thus wandering, wafted like the thistle-down,
Yet not so wholly aimless, not so moved
By impulse from without, liker a bee
That with the wind goes humming, yet directs
At his own gladsome will his gauzy wings
Right onward to the honeyed sycamore,
Or silent peal of pendant fox-glove bells,
Or mountain-bosom from a distance seen
Pitch-black, but near as winds his shrilly horn,
Brighter than purple on a monarch's robe,
And bathed in richer perfume—wandering thus
In ignorance of the future of my life,
Nor caring, wishing, hoping, fearing aught
Beyond the pregnant present—each wild day
A world within itself, my griefs and joys
All at my own creation and command,
As far as human soul may be let loose
From impositions of necessity,
Forgetting oft in self-willed fancy's flight
All human ties that would enchain her dreams
Down to a homelier bliss, and loving more
The dim aërial shadow of this life
Even than the substance of the life itself,
Morn found me on the mountain-tops, and Night
Descended on me in the glens, where hut
Or shieling scarcely hid me from the stars.
All shadows then of life how beautiful!
As sometimes when the sunset spell is strong,
And all the elements seem rarified,
Mountains and woods and towers delight the soul,
On an inverted world in wonder down
Deep-gazing, as it hangs in the abyss
Of the evanished lake, far far beyond
The real mountains, where the living flocks
Are browsing or at rest—the real woods,
Where flit the living birds from shade to shade,
Or in the sunshine sing—the real towers,
Where chime the clear-toned Sabbath evening-bells
Unto the real clouds, whose purple light
On people walking to the house of God
Falls gracious; for all these are what they seem,

And but by common things inhabited ;
But those are all ideal in that glow
So evanescent in its purity,
And appertain to a remoter life
Untouched by sin or sorrow, not a sound
Disturbing their beatitude divine,
Transmitted, through the silence of the eye,
To that congenial region of the spirit
Where all reflections from this noisy world
Hang floating in their beauty, till the breath
Of some rude passion curl along the calm,
And all at once is gone ! Then reappears
The daily bosom of our mother earth,
Where weary feet are pacing to and fro ;
And weary hearts are wishing they were laid
In her insensate dust !

Those days are gone ;
And it has pleased high Heaven to crown my life
With such a load of happiness, that at times
My very soul is faint with bearing up
The blessèd burden. For that airy world,
So full of coruscations and strange fires
Electric, one that by a golden chain
Hangs balanced in its planetary peace,
I love to dwell in now ; and in the mists
And storms that sometimes stain its atmosphere,
Or shake it till the orb doth seem to quake
Even to its centre, I behold the hand,
I hear the voice of my Creator's love.
And now the Genius of the household fire—
The Christian Lar, who hath our Sabbath hours
Under his felt protection, whispers low
His gentle inspiration through my heart
Which loveth dearlier now a homeborn song—
That I may chant unto my children dear,
Not undelighted with a father's voice,
To them made music by a father's love—
Than wildest strain in sylvan solitude
Piped to the strange-faced rocks, and figures grim
That frown in forests, when the day is dark
As night, in spite of the meridian sun.
What though imagination's wings be chained ?
Formed are the fetters of soft balmy flowers,
Gathered by angel-hands in Paradise.

No need that I should with creative eyes
Raise up fair shadowy creatures racing fleet
On the hill-side, or lying fast asleep
On mossy couch, beneath the mossy arms
Of antique oak,—some shape of beauty rare,
Oread or Dryad,—or in grotto cool
Among the music of the waterfall
Naiad as pure as the small silver spring
In which she had her birth, on some May-morn
Issuing in pearly beauty from the gleam,
And disappearing like a foambell there,
When first she hears the harmless stockdove's voice.
For rising up throughout my wedded years
That melted each away so quietly
Into the other, that I never thought
Of wondering at the growth before my eyes
Of my own human flowers most beautiful—
So imperceptible had been the change
From infancy to childhood—lovely both—
And then to grace most meek and maidenly,
Three spirits given by God to guard and keep
For ever in their native innocence,
Glide o'er my floors like sunbeams, and like larks
Are oft heard singing to their happy selves,
No eye upon them but the eye of Heaven.
And now, revisiting these Abbey-walls,
How changed my state from what it was of yore,
When 'mid an hundred homes no home had I
Whose hearth had power to chain me from the rest!
No roof, no room, no bower in the near wood
In which at once are now concentrated
All the sweet scents and all the touching sounds,
All the bright rays of life.

Linked hand in hand,
Mute and most spirit-like, from out the gloom
Of the old Abbey issuing, all their smiles
Subdued to a sweet settled pensiveness
By the religion of the ruin, lo!
The three came softly gliding on my dream,
Attended by the moonshine; for the Orb
Looked through the oriel window, and the vale
Soon overflowed with light. As they approached,
My heart embraced them in their innocence,
And sinless pride expressed itself in prayer.

From morn they had been with me in the glens
And on the mountains, by the lakes and rivers,
And through the hush of the primeval woods,
And such a beauteous day was fitly closed
By such a beauteous night. No word they spake,
But held their swimming eyes in earnestness
Fixed upon mine, as if they wished to hear
My voice amid the silence, for the place
Had grown too awful for their innocent hearts;
And half in love, and half in fear, they prest
Close to their father's side, till at a sign
They sat them down upon a fragment fallen,
With all its flowers and mosses, from the arch
Through which the moon was looking; and I said
That I would tell to them a tale of tears,
A tale of sorrows suffered long ago!

Close to our feet an antique tombstone lay,
Which time, with reverential tenderness,
Had seemed to touch, so that the images,
There sculptured centuries ago, were yet
Perfect almost as when they felt the shower
Of the first agony! All in mail, from head
To feet, the figure of a warrior stretched
His height heroic, by his side a sword
Such as of old, with huge two-handed sway,
Made lanes in battles, but the giant-hands,
Palm unto palm, even like a saint's in prayer,
Upon his breast were folded piously,
And meek his visage as a child's in sleep.
Across the stone and at that warrior's feet
The figure—so it seemed—of female young,
In simple vestments, such as worn of old
By one of low degree, the child of hind
Or forester. The very winds of heaven,
As if in pity of their mournfulness
Had spared the lineaments of that gentle face,
And delicately, in its dove-like calm,
Her bosom now did in the moonlight lie;
No wrinkle on her forehead, and the hair,
Though stone-wreathed, seemingly as soft as silk
Beneath a silken fillet that upbound
The gathered locks into a simple snood,
Such as in olden time each maiden wore
Before her bridal day. In lowliest guise,

As if unworthy by the side to lie
Of that great lord, whose lineage high was drawn
From crownèd kings—an image he of pride,
And she of most abased humility,
As far beneath that mighty one in death
As she had been in life, when palace-halls
Hung o'er his unhelmed head, or banners proud
Rustled o'er his plumes in battle—She the while
Plaiting her rushes by the cottage door,
Or singing old songs in the sylvan shade
To her sole self among the spotted deer.

Oft had I gazed on those two effigies,
When to the solitary mountain-gloom
Sent devious from my pilgrimage, by force
Of those fine impulses that bear us on
From awe to awe, till suddenly is found
Some glorious vision that we did not seek,
Nor knew was on the earth ; and of the dreams
That came to me from out the ruined pile,
Legend surviving dimly when the moth
Hath eat to dust the hoary chronicles,
And ballad sung with many a various voice
In different glens, by maidens at their wheel
To wondering children, or at hour of noon
In gay hay-harvest, 'neath the hawthorn shade,
To toil by music to his strength restored
As if by dropping dews—by sweet degrees
My soul formed to itself a history
Of the dead figured thus—a tale that grew
Almost unconsciously and unawares ;
As one who wandering through the rich-stored woods
In dreary idlesse, ever and anon,
Plucks here and there a ground-flower, till, behold !
Yellow and blue and purple, in his hands
One gathered constellation, that illumes
With sudden beauty all the wilderness.
In days of yore, these pleasant realms—now stretched
In variegated beauty from the dip
Of the low hills in which the mountains fade
Away from the Lake-land, into wide bays,
And far, far off to beaconed promontories—
Were forest-grown even to the very sea ;
Nor wanted Walney's storm-beat isle, now bare,
Its murmur of old groves, nor Fouldrey's Pile

Its stately sycamores that loved the spray
Of the rock-scaling tide. The horizon hung
On trees, round all its dark circumference;
While here and there, a church-tower lifted up
Its peaceful battlements, or warlike keep
Frowned on the cliff, the watchman's sun-tipt spear
Far glancing o'er the woods. Hundreds of huts
Were hidden in that sylvan gloom,—some perched
On verdant slopes from the low coppice cleared;
Some in deep dingles, secret as the nest
Of robin-redbreast, built among the roots
Of pine, on whose tall top the throstle sings.
Hundreds of huts! yet all apart, and felt
Far from each other; 'mid the multitude
Of intervening stems, each glen or glade
By its own self a perfect solitude,
Hushed but not mute, for many a little stream,
Now dead, then sang its sweet accompaniment
Unto the ceaseless warbling of the birds,
And silence listened to the frequent chant
Of stated hymn that from the Abbey rose
By nights, and days as still as any nights,
Each echo more mysterious than before,
Far, far away reviving, and at last
Evanished, like a prayer received in heaven.

Oh! let one Hut be rescued from the dust!
And let its thousand rose-balls burn again
On porch-wall roof, and let the self-same dews
There lie unmelted by the morn that rose
Hundreds of years ago! Oh! back to life
Return Thou in thy matchless beauty—Thou
Whom Love and Wonder in the olden time
Baptised in tears that flowed from very bliss,
THE FLOWER OF FURNESS! by no other name
Known to the dwellers in the woods, when life
Rejoiced to breathe within a form so fair;
Nor now by other name is ever known
That image lying at that warrior's feet!

Lo! walking forth into the sunny air,
Her face yet shaded by the pensiveness
Breathed o'er it from her holy orisons,
She pours a blessing from her dewy eyes
O'er that low roof, and then the large blue orbs

Salute serenely the high arch of heaven.
On—on she shines away into the woods!
And all the birds burst out in ecstasy
As she hath reappeared. And now she stands
In a lone glade beside the Fairies' Well—
So named she in delight a tiny spring
In the rich mosses fringed with flowery dies,
O'erhung by tiny trees, that tinier still
Seemed through that mirror, in whose light she loved
Each morn to reinstate with simple braids
Into its silken snood her virgin hair,
Unconsciously admired by her own soul
Made happy—such is Nature's law benign—
Even by the beauty of her own innocence.

Of gentle blood was she; but tide of time,
Age after age, bore onwards to decay
The fortunes of her fathers, and at last
The memory of the once illustrious dead
Forgotten quite, and to all common ears
The name they were so proud of most obscure
And meaningless, among the forest-woods,
The poor descendant of that house was now,
But for the delicate Wild-Flower blooming there,
Last of his race, a lowly Forester!
Yet never Lady, in her jewelled pride,
As she appeared upon her bridal morn,
Pictured by limner who had lived in love
With rarest beauty all his life, in halls
Of nobles, and the palaces of kings,
E'er looked more lovely through Time's tints divine,
Than she who stood now by the Fairies' Well,
Imagination's phantom, lily-fair,
In pure simplicity of humblest life.

Hark! hark! the music of a bugle-horn!
And lo! all bright in hunter's green, a plume
Of eagle feathers nodding as he bounds
Deerlike into the glade, with bow and arrows
Armed, but no savage outlaw he, a Form
In stature taller than the sons of men,
Descends of a sudden on the wilderness,
Before that Flower, now quaking in her fear,
Even like her sister lilies, when a flash

Of lightning sheers the woods, and the strange growl
Of thunder mutters through the solitude.
But soon that fear expired—or mixed with love,
Such love as innocent spirits feel, amazed
By some surpassing shape of mortal mould,
Earthly, yet lending to the things of earth
A statelier, more seraphic character.
Recovering from that tremor, a long gaze
Bound her to what she feared and loved; and then
Folding her hands across her breast, she sank
In a submissive attitude meekly down,
And gracefully, with bended knees, saluting
Noble, or Prince, or King!

Even like some Power
Olympian, of that high mythology,
In whose religion fair Achaia held
Perpetual intercourse with visible forms
Balmy and bright with scents and hues of heaven,
And oft enamoured of Earth's Daughters, Gods,
Descending to enjoy our mortal love,
Forgot their native skies, that Vision stood
One moment in his majesty, then stooped
Lord-like in homage of that lowly maid,
And raised her to his bosom, on the light
Of her closed eyelids, letting fall a kiss
As gentle as when brother lays his lips
On a sweet sister's brow, when on return
From foreign travel he beholdeth her
Whom he had left a child, to maidenhood
Grown up in happiness, a stately flower,
Whom all admire, but few may dare to love!

No sound amid the silence of the woods
Was heard, save moaning faint and far away
The stockdove's voice; and near the Fairies' Well
The beating of that maiden's heart, such sighs
As murmur from the lips of one oppressed
In sleep by some divine and dangerous dream.
Released from that too dear imprisonment,
At bidding of those princely eyes, and hands
Familiar with command, yet gentle both,
She sat her down obedient, by the brink
Of the pure spring, and knew that by her side,

Although her darkened eyes beheld him not,
Was that bright Noble with his eagle-plumes.
"Would that she were within her father's hut,
Escaped from the delight that filled and shook
Her soul with dread!" So prayed she—but her limbs
Were chained as palsy-stricken, and her face
O'erflowed with powerless tears! Soothed by sweet words,
Whose meanings yet were indistinct and dim,
But murmured in such music as she felt
Could breathe no evil, and could only come
From one who pity had for innocence,
Ere long she lifted up her face, and gave
Again its troubled beauty to the gaze
That looked into her life! That she was fair,—
That it had pleasèd God to make her fair,
She knew, as well as that the summer sky
Is felt by all hearts to be beautiful.
Else, wherefore paused each passer-by to bid
A blessing on her countenance? Why was she
Alone, among so many maidens, called
The Flower of Furness? Yet, if ever pride
Did touch her spirit at that pleasant name,
Such pride it was as one might almost think,
When gazing on the lily or the rose,
Breathes a fine impulse through these Favourites
Of sun and air and universal nature,
Till shaking off the dewdrops, they expand
In their full beauty, o'er some desert-place
Shedding the lustre of their happiness!
All too divine her loveliness to praise;
But showered from eloquent lips and eloquent eyes
Came down upon her now such looks—rays—words,
Blended in union irresistible,
That no more could her bosom turn away
From that descent of sound, and light, and dew,
Than rose or lily from the gentle face
Of the flower-loving Sun, when o'er her bed,
Her humble bed in the untrodden wild,
The soaring lark within the rainbow sings!

Within th' embrace, even on the very breast
Of one of England's most illustrious knights,
By birth illustrious, and by feats of arms
Done for the Holy Cross in Palestine,
As innocent entirely as a dove

In pity prest by some affectionate child
To its fond bosom,—unacquainted yet
With sin, or sin-born sorrow, however near
May be their fatal presence, lieth now—
And God's own eye is on her, and the eyes
Of all His angels in that perilous hour—
The daughter of a lowly forester!
Too humble to oppose, too blest to fear
The kiss that thrills her forehead! For a name,
That from the far-off mountains to the sea
Was like a household word in hut and hall,
Now murmured in her ear; and never maid,
High-born or humble, suffered scath or scorn
From the Le Fleming, in his glorious youth
Pure as a star, whose light is always pure,
Because its station is aloft, and prayers
From earth prevent its being stained in heaven.
It passed—that meeting—with the morning clouds!
But oft and oft was with the morning clouds
Renewed, and by the light of setting suns
And rising moons, and that soft burning star
Which ever, so impassioned spirits dream,
Looks down on lovers like a thing that loves.
And ever as they met by day or night,
That maiden yielded up her trancèd life
To the dear dream, which all the while she knew
Was but a dream, and strove she to believe
That it might last for ever, though a voice,
A still small voice within the aching depths
Where fear and sorrow struggled, oft did say
That all such dreams were transient as the dew.
And aye at his departure disappeared
All joy from this dark world. The sylvan shades
Were haunted now by miserable thoughts,
Coming and going ghost-like; what they meant
By their dire threatenings, one so weak as she
And wretched might not know; but whisperings
Prophetic of some sad calamity,
Of early death and burial, from the hush
Of the old trees would come, and oft did pass
Close by her ear, upon the bed where sleep
Now seldom dropped oblivion. Now the moon,
The splendid harvest moon, that used to shine
Upon her pleasant paths so cheerfully,
Disturbed her with a lustre all too fair

For weary weeper on a sinful earth;
And something, though she wist not what it was,
Something whose shadow was most terrible,
Oft seemed to stand between her and the stars.
Seldom her old songs now the maiden sang!
They told of lowly and of happy loves,
Of true hearts, after many a patient year
That tried their faith by absence, or the woe
Of rumoured death, or houseless poverty,
Wedded at last, and living all their lives
In merry greenwood, cheerful as the doves
That cooed, or flowers that bloomed, upon their roof.
She durst not sing such happy songs as these,
And fain would have forgot the melodies
In which they were embalmed! Oh! never now
Had she the heart to chant that ballad old,
Wherein 'twas shown how once a king's own son,
Disguisèd as a woodsman, came and wooed
A forest maiden, and at last prevailed
On the poor wretch to be his paramour;
Who, in a little month, forsaken, died!
But not till she had broke her parents' hearts!
"But not till she had broke her parents' hearts!"
A strange voice muttered. When she looked around,
She saw that not so much as one leaf stirred,
Or insect's wing, in all the solitude!
And thus there was not one familiar word,
Or one familiar thought, that could not bring
The groans from out her heart, as if it lay,
Her very soul, outstretched upon a rack,
While a dark fiend did smite, till swoonings dim
O'ershadowed all her senses, and despair
Fell on her worse than death! And this was—Love!

But in his passion for that star-like flower,
Which, waving sweetly in the woodland air,
Unto his rapt imagination seemed
To show whate'er was fairest, brightest, best,
In the created things that beauty breathe,
More touching far, because so suddenly,
And far removed out of the lofty sphere
In which he shone, the new Existence rose
Almost beyond belief, far far beyond,
Even in the grace he loved, all images
Of lady or queen in fabling poesy

(And he had listened to the amorous lays
Sung to the harp by wandering Troubadour
In tent pitched by the sea of Galilee,
Or by the desert-well o'ershadowèd
By palm-trees blest by weary pilgrimage),
In such a passion the Le Fleming walked
Statelier and statelier, like a very god
Who reigneth in his undivided sway
O'er his own world ; and prouder far was he
Of the fair May he wooed among the woods,
And of the fragrant lilies in her breast,
And of those moist celestial violets
Her undisguising eyes, than heretofore
He e'er had been of smile of high-born dame,
Who, from balcony stooping down, let fall
To him, the victor in the tournament,
Her colours sighed for by all England's peers.

From that great sire, who with the Conqueror
Came over from the warlike Normandy,
Le Fleming gloried in his lofty line
Unstained, for centuries, by any stream
Of less illustrious blood. And would he wed
The daughter of a Forester ? blest flower,
Although indeed she be ! by nature dropt
Among the common weeds that fade unseen
Around his lordly feet ! No ! she shall be
His Bonnibelle, his Burde, his Paramour,
To some enchanted forest-bower among
The guardian mountains spirited away !
And there to sing, and sigh, and weep, and weave
Disconsolate fancies in her solitude ;
By vows, which Heaven itself will consecrate,
Even at the sylvan altar of pure Truth,
Together linked for ever, far beyond
The sanctity of Ritual e'er pronounced
In abbey's gloom by soulless celibate !
"To sing, and sigh, and smile, and weep !" Ay, there
Despised, loved, pitied, worshipped and adored !
For beauty such as hers might be adored,
In bower of bliss, though Sorrow kept the door,
And Sin, veiled like a Seraph, strewed the couch
Unruffled by Repentance !

Oh! my soul!
How glimmering are the bounds that oft divide
Virtue from Vice, and from the Night of Guilt
The Day-spring of religion! Conscience shuts
Her shining eye, lulled into fatal sleep
Even by the voice of Love! or, worst of all
Imaginable miseries, looketh on
And listeneth, heedless of her sacred trust,
On troubled bliss that leads our souls to death!
Though God's vicegerent, sovereign of the soul,
And showing clear credentials from above,
Yet even that Seraph, by allurements won,
Or by severe temptation terrified,
The Terrene for the Heavenly (as at night
A marish vapour seems a luminary
Whose dwelling is upon the steadfast skies),
Mistakes most ruefully; and, slave of Fate,
Walks onwards to perdition! Witness ye!
Who on the wings of passion, even like doves
Borne by their instinct o'er untravelled seas,
Safe in the hurricane, till they gently drop
Into their native nest, vainly believe
That you, like those glad birds, are flying home
To Heaven, directed by the Polar Star
Hung out to guide us mortal mariners,
While you are hurrying to the sunless clime
Of God-forsaken sin and misery!

"O Father, Mother!"—"Fear not, mine own Flower!
But they will both be happy, when they see
Thee happy as the morn. Thou must not weep
Any more tears for them; and yet I love
That paleness on thy cheek, for Nature's ties
Are holy; but the holiest of them all
Is that, which spite of fortune and of fate,
And evil stars, in life and death unites
Two souls whom this bad world and its bad laws
In vain would seek to sever! From that world
Far, far apart, and all its heartlessness,
We two shall live—Oh! let me see thine eyes
Again, and kiss away these idle tears—
And not a whisper ever shall be heard
From any human voice that is not charged
With prayers and blessings upon thee and thine!
Yes! thou, even in their prayers, shalt still be called

The Flower of Furness, when the poor do kneel
To Him who pities and forgives us all,
And our transgressions, calling on the Saints,
And Her whom we adore, to hold thee ever
Under their own protection, as thou walk'st
Among the woods, dispensing charity
To widows and to orphans; every boon
Felt in their sickness, penury, or age,
To be still more angelical and divine,
Because of the sweet sound and the sweet light
Breathed with it from thy bosom and thine eyes
Day after day more and more beautiful,
If that indeed may be, from being vowed
To love and pity all life-long, and knowing
No happiness but that of doing good!
Yet, never never ceasing, till we die,
To hold within the sanctuary of thy heart
Thine own Le Fleming, though unworthy he,
But for the life-deep passion that attends
Thy coming and thy going, on thy breast
To lay his head in heaven! God bless that smile!—
Ay! ours will be the sunniest life, my dove,
That ever glanced or glided o'er the earth!
Sometimes upon thy palfrey, silver-reined,
Thy true knight by thy side, through alleys green
Of glimmering forest, queen-like thou shalt go,
As in adventurous days of old romance;
But peril near thee shall be none, no fiend
Or giant starting up among the woods
All still and beautiful as Faëry Londe.
Or habited like huntress, even with bow
In thy fair hand, and o'er thy shoulders fair
A quiver, thou shalt like Diana's self
Pursue the spotted deer. Yet drop of blood
In these our innocent pastimes ne'er shall stain
Arrow of thine; for thou from infancy
Hast loved the timid race; most sweet to thee
To stand and look upon the hind at play
In shady places with her fawns, and soon
They all will learn to look upon thy face
With fearless love, nor shun thy noiseless feet
Along the moss-sward underneath the bows
So mossy of the overarching oaks.
Oh! I will lead thee through a hundred vales
Solemn or sweet to visit, our two selves

The only human creatures in the gloom
Flung down like night upon us from the cliffs
Of huge Helvellyn, where the eagles cry;
Or in the hush, as gentle as thy sleep,
Of lovely Grassmere, where the church-tower stands
Above the ashes of my ancestors,
A place always as peaceful as a dream;
Or floating in our pinnace through the isles
Of wooded Windermere, the river-lake
Hung for a while between two worlds of stars.
Nor need'st thou fear, my innocent, with me
To visit, through the moonshine steering slow,
On Lady-Isle that holy Oratory;
And on my bosom leaning, there to pray
That if indeed there any error be,
Frailty, or guilt, or sin, in love like ours,
Even for the dear sake of such contrite tears
As now flow from thine eyes, and still must flow,—
For fondest kisses cannot reach their source
Profound—there both of us will plead and pray,
My spirit then as humble as thine own,
That it may be forgiven. But if from thee
I now must walk away in my despair,
And never, never see thee any more
In all this loveless life, this weary world;
If all my supplications now must fall
Into that bosom, idle as the shower
Of transitory tears which soon will melt
Away in its fair sweetness, how shall I
Bear up against the utter wretchedness
Of such a desolation? Keep my head
From going down to a dishonoured grave!"

He ceased; nor in that passion did he know,
Although he dimly feared, his wickedness.
For his was not a heart of stone; but filled
To overflowing with heroic thoughts,
With tender feelings, and with fancies wild;
A being he, if ever such there were,
By nature made to love, and be beloved,
Even as a vernal day. But pride, the sin
Of seraphs, and of mortal men who stand
Upon the sunny summits of this life,
The native greatness of his character
Had lowered unawares, and to the core

Corrupted, but not withered; for they grew
Strong at the heart, and in luxuriance still,
The passions that were given him to uplift
His soul, and gain for him a name in peace,
Fair, as in war it was most glorious.
And now he would beguile to sin and shame,
And woe and death, and doom beyond the grave—
For in the sacred judgments of our souls
Such seems the lot of ruined innocence—
That virgin, whom his love had found as pure
As dewdrop in a dream, as glad as light
Upon the hills of God!

With claspèd hands,
And eyes beseechful, yet upbraiding not,
Imploringly the silent statue prayed
That he would yet have pity on her youth,
Even for her parents' sakes! Then like a dove,
That, stricken by some sudden bird of prey,
Falls moaning near its nest, down at his feet
She dropt, with one long sigh that seemed to say,
"My heart is broken!" To the Fairies' Well
He bore the corpse; for in his agony
That word, most hideous of all hideous words,
Was heard within the dream of his remorse,
While a more ghastly whiteness overspread
The face of her whom he had murdered. Lo!
Through the dim opening of her eyes appears
Something that may be life! The eyelids move
A little, and that glimpse of heavenly blue,
Faint though it be and clouded, may not dwell
In orbs that have eclipsèd been by death.
See! how the breathing mystery we call Soul
Comes back! Where was it even now, when throbbed
No pulse—no sense took notice—and the heart
Beat not nor fluttered, nor one single thought
Remained within the many-chambered brain?
Gazing bewildered on some other world,
She all at once starts up unto her knees,
And fixes wildly on Le Fleming's face
Eyes full of manifest insanity,
As if she were a fiend unto a fiend
Gibbering in wrathful speech. Oh! not a word
Has meaning, or, if any meaning range
Among the altered syllablings of names

Familiar once and sacred, it is such
As well might break the hardest heart to hear,
Sinful, and like a poisonous breath distilled
Even from the dews of those most innocent lips,
Even from the sweet stream of those innocent veins,
Even from the pure drops of that innocent heart,
Whose worst confessions, before God and man,
A little while ago were scarcely worth
The shedding of a tear!

But Mercy's hand
Hath readjusted now the wondrous springs
On which the reasonable spirit moves,
And hath at once her being and her powers,
All knowledge of herself and of this world,
Of Heaven and of the God who reigns in Heaven;
Else, in their dread disorder, to the beasts
That range the fields inferior in all sense
And feeling, the most sad and terrible
Of all the sad and terrible things in Nature—
And once again the Flower of Furness shines
In all her beauty brought back from afar,
In innocence returning from the gates
Of Hades. "Yes! I swear by all the stars
Reeling so strangely through the skies—by all
The uncouth glimmering of that moon—by Him
Who died for sinners—and a sinner I
Beyond all other sinners—and I swear
By father and by mother, whom my sin
Will soon send to their graves, to follow thee,
Where'er thou beckonest, and in love to lie
Upon thy breast, though in some dungeon-cell
Our couch may be, among all crawling things
That flesh and blood doth shudder at, and life
Recoils from into madness—I am thine!
Body and soul—am thine! and for thy sake
I sacrifice them both to endless death!"

Remorse! What art thou but a pang of guilt,
By the destruction of some bliss enjoyed
Alarmed and troubled, or by vanishing
Of some bliss madly longed for? Virtue hangs
Upon a stay more frail than gossamere
That hangs on thee! Back from the gates of death
By thee no sinner ever yet was turned;

For thou art as unlike to sweet Contrition
As the swart Ethiop on the Afric desert
To Una wandering along Faëry Land!
As bounds upon the battle-field the soul
Of warrior to the cry of victory
Round his Van-banner, bounded then the soul
Of the Le Fleming! Cruel in his bliss,
And most relentless—nor to pity moved
By that confession, in their darkness felt
By very fiends to be most pitiful;
But even while her parents' ghosts stood by,
So said the lost child who beheld them plain,
His old grey head and *her* distracted eyes,
He tied her to her oath, as to a stake
Within the roarings of the coming sea;
And to her fate resigned, she touched his lips
With one kiss cold as tombstone when the night
Descends in frost upon a cemetery.

Not till the parting that did then befall,
Could that lost creature ever know that Love
Was but one name for all life's miseries.
For she had fixed another trysting-hour
From which she never more was to return
Unto her sinless bed, but disappear
Away with him from her old parents' eyes,
And before God Almighty break their hearts.
The moon had sunk; and over all the stars
Black clouds came sailing from the sea; and sighs
And groans most human-like went up and down
The creaking woods, with dreariest intervals
Of utter silence. At the door she stood,
And feared to lift the latch; then blind and deaf
She tottered o'er the threshold, and beheld
Her miserable father on his knees,
Before what, by the twinkling of the hearth,
Was seen to be a corpse—her mother's corpse,
Sitting with unclosed eyelids on a chair,
And staring glazedly throughout the gloom
Straight on her daughter's face! "My wickedness
Has killed my mother!" And no other words
Did issue from her lips till morning light;
But in a most unbreathing trance she lay,
Her father sometimes fearing she was dead.
As if awaking from her usual sleep,

She at her usual hour arose, and knelt
By her bedside to say her usual prayers,
When all on a sudden starting up, she paced
Like one who hath derangèd been for years,
In strange directions up and down the room,
Eyeing particular pieces of the walls,
As if that she were reading on a book,
And by the knowledge of some dismal thing
Distracted and amazed. Then all at once
Laying her finger on her lips, "Hush! hush!"
She said, "hush! hush! my mother sleeps!
Those cruel sunbeams must not be allowed
To strike her face!" Then with wild shrieks she flew
Into her father's arms, and tore herself
Next moment from them with distorted features,
Shouting and yelling, "Fiend—fiend—fiend!"

The sea,
Whose foam has been through all the thunderous night
With floating shipwreck strewn, begins at morn
To heave in terrible beauty, and subsiding
Hour after hour through all the fitful day
Into a rolling gloom, by sunset, lo!
The world of waters is as still as sleep!
So raged—so heaved—so rolled—and so to calm
Profound and perfect, that poor maniac's soul
Returned. And once again among the woods
The Flower of Furness in her beauty walked;
But pale and silent as a ghost, and none
In awe and pity dared to speak to her,
Or to the unearthly stillness of her grief.
In his bereavement her old father went,
As he had gone for more than forty years,
To work for their poor livelihood, far off
On the High-Furness fells. The day goes by,
On which our soul's belovèd dies! The day,
On which the body of the dead is stretched
By hands that decked it when alive; the day
On which the dead is shrouded; and the day
Of burial—one and all pass by! The grave
Grows green ere long; the churchyard seems a place
Of pleasant rest; and all the cottages,
That keep for ever sending funerals
Within its gates, look cheerful every one,
As if the dwellers therein never died,

And this earth slumbered in perpetual peace.
For every sort of suffering there is sleep
Provided by a gracious Providence,
Save that of sin. We must at first endure
The simple woe of knowing they are dead,
A soul-sick woe in which no comfort is,
And wish we were beside them in the dust!
That anguish dire cannot sustain itself;
But settles down into a grief that loves,
And finds relief in unreprovèd tears.
Then cometh Sorrow like a Sabbath! Heaven
Sends resignation down, and faith; and last
Of all, there falls a kind oblivion
Over the going out of that sweet light
In which we had our being; and the wretch,
Widowed and childless, laughs in his old age,
Laughs and is merry even among the tombs
Of all his kindred! Say not that the dead
Are unforgotten in their graves. For all
Beneath the sun and moon is transitory;
And sacred sorrow like a shadow flies,
As unsubstantial as the happiness
Whose loss we vainly wept.

And will she keep
That Trysting-Hour? And all for love of him
Who reigneth o'er her soul, as doth the sun,
Though hidden, o'er some melancholy sky,
Forsake her widowed father's house—the grave
Of her who died within the very hour
Her daughter pledged her oath to shame and sin?
That Trysting-Hour is come. The Wizard's Oak
With its dark umbrage hides them from the moon
And stars, but yet a little glimmering light
Is in the glade, and he beholds a face
White as the face of one who hath been dressed
That morning for interment, beautiful,
With fixèd features that shall never more
Be touched by one faint smile! "My mother's dead.
And I have been, and fear that I am now,
Not in my proper mind. But I am come,
Though weak in body as I am in soul
Most truly wicked,—I am come to keep
My oath, and go with thee to love and death!"

It was an hour for Passion's self to die
In Pity; and the moonshine sadly fell
On his caresses tender now and pure
As those in which a father holds his child,
When called on to set sail to-morrow's morn,
From his sole orphan, to some far-off sea.
A sacred hush subdued his blood, which flowed
As cold as hers who wept herself away
Within the embrace she had no cause to fear,
Or turn from in her innocence. Her love
Was felt to be religion towards one
Who, while the beatings of his heart met hers,
Knew how to venerate the sanctity
Of nature overwhelmed by vast distress.
By pity touched, and shaken by remorse,
He promised to allow her virgin life,
At her beseechings, till another Spring
To breathe amid her native woods; till then
To come no more upon her solitude.
"And haply thus," she said, "he might forget
Her sinful sorrow and her sinful love—
Her sinful self—and better it would be
For both their sakes, if ere next May-day came,
He were to hear that she was dead and buried!"

Into a foreign land he went away.
The winter came, and all the winter's snow
Again did melt and melt from the green earth;
And the warm winds of April woke once more
The sweet perennial flowers on bank and brae,
Primrose and violet, with embroidery rare
Decking the ground-moss in each forest glade,
Around the woodlark's nest. Once more the Spring
Upon the Flower of Furness looked from heaven;
And well might now the very elements
Sigh for her sake and weep. For she hath held,
All through the gloomy days and raving nights
Of winter, converse with a dreadful Shape,
Shadowy indeed, and unsubstantial,
Yet obvious on her path whene'er she went
Alone into the woods—with lips, hands, eyes,
All silent, and its glidings silent too,
But in its sadness always terrible,
Although it wore her mother's countenance,
With such dim alteration as the grave

Breathes o'er the ghost of one in life beloved!
If to the Fairies' Well she dared to go,
'Twas there! From out the holy Abbey's gloom
It issued! Underneath the Wizard's Oak
It had its seat; and from the solemn sea,
If ever near the moonlight waves she walked,
Arose the Apparition! That the grave,
Or land beyond the grave, sends back the dead,
From sin to warn in mercy, or to sin
To drive in wrath our miserable souls,
By passion and imagination stirred
From their mysterious depths, hath ever been
The creed of guilty creatures, terrified
By their communion with the spiritual world.
And yet religion saith we stand in need
Of no such spectral visitations. Guilt
The sole creator of all ghosts that haunt
Her gloom! One dread Idea duly comes,
As on the dial's face the certain shade
Upon our Conscience; and our moral being,
Immortal prey of its immortal fears,
Doth shudder at some immaterial Thing
In which its apprehensions are embodied
Of divine wrath and retribution;
A messenger sent to us, so we think,
From shades that lie beyond the shades of death,
But rising from the night of our own souls
And lost therein, again to reappear
When Faith's star sets, and heaven itself is black
As hell extending through Eternity!

"Have pity on your daughter! On the child
Whom you so tenderly on earth did love!
Have pity on me, for our Saviour's sake!"
But still the frowning Phantom turned away!
Nor had the name of the dear Son of God
Power o'er that icy ear, that icy eye,
Unchangeable as the Almighty's doom!

May-day had come and gone, and May-day night
From heaven o'er many a merry festival
Had hung her earliest star. The Trysting-Hour
Fell like a hush upon the woods; and lo!
True as the sea-tide from some far-off shore,
The Knight of Rydal, underneath the shade

Of the Old Wizard's Oak. Nor panted long
His heart for her sweet footsteps ; like a leaf
Instant she came, as lightly, noiselessly,
And murmuring in his ear, "Within an hour
Come to my father's hut ;" ere he could kiss
Her brow or breast, the shade had disappeared!
The Knight stood there, till many a brilliant eye
Looked through the blue serene ; the Trysting-Star
Was close beside the moon ; and soon he stooped
His eagle-plumes below the humble door
Within whose shade the Flower of Furness slept.
All full of moonlight was the little room ;
And there, upon her lowly couch did lie,
Clothed in white raiment, free from spot or stain
As her own virgin limbs, her virgin soul,
The daughter of the widowed Forester,
Whom in his passion he had sought to lure
To sin and shame, even while he talked of heaven.
"These are my bridal robes!" and he beheld
That she was in her shroud. "Nay, do not fear
To kiss my lips, though they be white and cold,
And whiter still, and colder soon will be!"
Sweet sounds he heard, but in his agony
He knew not now the meaning of the words ;
But well he knew the meaning of the sight
That swam before his eyes, for death was there,
As surely as that death is in the grave.
"Our love was sinful—and my Mother's ghost
Was sent by God to save us from our sin.
Long, long she bore a dreadful countenance,
For though my spirit shuddered in remorse,
It had not known repentance. But last night,
When I was praying, blest contrition came,
And at that moment, softer, sweeter far
Than ever voice of earthly thing could be,
A whisper said, 'My daughter! thy great sin
Hath been forgiven thee!' I raised up my eyes,
And close beside my bed, within the reach
Of my embrace, my sainted Mother stood,
One of God's Angels, and let fall a kiss
Upon my mortal brow, that breathed of heaven.
And now my days are numbered on the earth.
Before that moon shall set, below the Throne
Must stand the soul of her who speaks to thee ;

And I may now in death a holier blessing
Leave with thee, if thy heart indeed be changed,
Than ever yet did sinful woman's love
Give to her husband on their bridal day.
I knew, before I saw that gracious Ghost,
I had not long to live; and in the woods,
Oh! even beside the Fairies' Well, I framed
This shroud, and gathered for myself these flowers—
Take one, and keep it for my sake—the rest
Go with me to the grave. Oh! never, never,
Through all the longest life of happiness
That heaven may have in store for thee, forget
Me, the poor penitent! and swear to me,
Swear on this cross, that never more thine eyes
Will fall with sinful thoughts on any wretch
Like me—for I, thou saidst, was fair—now look
Upon my breast—ay, thou may'st kiss it now,
Unblamed! And I unblamed may take the kiss
To heaven! See—see—they come—they come!
My mother's Spirit, and my little sister's
Who left us when a child, and her's who died
A few days after that her lover's ship
Was wrecked on Holy Isle, my earliest friend,
Out of our own small family—Holy ones!
Oh! bear me with you on your wings away!
Farewell, my Father—weep not for thy child!
And thou! for whom I die—Farewell—farewell!"

He looked, and she was dead!—the Civil Wars
Ere long did drench all England in her best
And richest blood; and fighting valiantly
For the Red Rose of Lancaster he fell,
Foremost among his conquering Chivalry,
And then his great heart gloriously got rid
Of all its mortal sorrows. He had told
Unto his sister, the fair Lady Blanche,
The story of his love and his despair;
A gentle lady, in her pride of place
Most poor in spirit, and who looked on life,
Humble or high, as Christians used to look
In apostolic days. His obsequies
Were celebrated—such his own desire—
In Furness Abbey, and his body laid
Within its holy cloisters. With a fine

And pious feeling, she herself designed,
In her own brain and her own heart, his Tomb!
And oft, 'tis said, she came and sat for hours
Beside the sculptor, while he chiselled out
Into the deep repose of shadowed death
These Images, till she through tears beheld
Her Hero-Brother in his panoply,
A most majestic Figure! and as meek
The Flower of Furness lying at his feet!

UNIMORE.

A DREAM OF THE HIGHLANDS.

[It appears from some pencil-marks on the margins of his copy of Unimore, that the author intended to have made some very extensive alterations on this poem. None of the hints, however, which he had jotted down for his own guidance, have been worked out by him—so that the text of the poem, with the exception of two or three verbal alterations from the MS. referred to, is here printed as it originally stood in *Blackwood's Magazine*.]

VISION FIRST.

MORVEN.

Morven and Morn and Spring and Solitude!
As yet it is scarce sunrise, but the sun
Sends dawn before him, while his dazzling disc
Is soaring from the sea, a gentle light,
Tender and delicate exceedingly,
'Neath which, as if it were a glittering veil,
Lies the new-woke and undisturbèd earth,
Conscious once more of the sweet hour of Prime.
No object in creation now looks dead.
Stones, rocks, knolls, heather, broom, and furze and fern,
Have all a life-like semblance in the hush,
So strong is the expression of their joy;
Alive appears each solitary tree,
Half-tree, half-shrub, birch with its silver stem,
And hazel azure-hued; with feeling smiles,
The feeling of its own fresh loveliness,
That budding brake; and these wild briers enwreathed
With honeysuckles wild, brimful of life,
Now trail along, and clamber up and fill
The air with odours, by short-sleeping bee
Already visited; though not a bird
Within the nested foliage more than stirs,
Or twitters o'er the blissful wilderness.
Life breathes intenser beauty o'er the flowers.

There within one small round of greensward set
Dew-diamonded daisies, happy all
In their own sweetness and simplicity;
With lustre burnishing yon mossy nook
An inexhaustible hoard of primroses,
Heaped up by spring for the delight of morn,
Miser at once and prodigal; here steeped,
And striped and starred in colours manifold,
Mosses that 'twould be sin to tread upon;
And lo! the white mist lying like a dream,
Motionless almost, yet the while ascending
With gradual revelation of the desert
Brightly and balmily swimming far and wide,
And yet the spirit of its character
Varying not altering, as the circle spreads
Serener and more spacious;—Like the Land
Where old songs say the Silent People dwell,
And aye one creature with a Christian name
Attends the Fairy Queen, by her beloved
O'er all elves else, though spite of all that love,
Oft is her seven years' sojourn dimmed with tears
Shed for their sake who, since the fatal hour
That saw their daughter spirited away,
Have little done but wander up and down
Wondering and weeping, or upon the brae
Whence she evanished, with their faces plunged
In both their hopeless hands, sit side by side,
Far from all human ken, from morn till night,
And all on through the moonlight starriness,
Without once knowing that there is a sky.

Morven and Morn and Spring and Solitude!
In front is not the scene magnificent?
Through the mist partly broken into fragments
Fleece-like, and partly rolled voluminous
Higher and higher up what now is seen
To be a range of mountains, blind-faced cliffs
And hoary crags and blasted stumps look out
Strangely, and all as if they were alive,
From midst of that disparting glamoury:
While from yon indistinct and dubious gloom,
Even now as sable as a mass of night,
Softening and brightening into woodiness
A shadowy slope with loveliest lights bestrewn
(For see! the sun is in ascension),

Emerges an old forest. Haunt, no doubt,
Of many a sylvan, shy, thick-spotted roe,
And red-deer vagrant from the stony heights
Below the eagle's eyrie ; single trees,
Each in itself a grove, at intervals
Gigantic towering o'er a race of giants,
Illustrious in the yellow glow of morn.
And now the mists from earth are clouds in heaven ;
Clouds slowly castellating in a calm
Sublimer than a storm ; while brighter breathes
O'er the whole firmament the breadth of blue,
Because of that excessive purity
Of all those hanging snow-white palaces,
A gentle contrast, but with power divine.

Morven and Morn and Spring and Solitude !
A multitudinous sea of mountain-tops ;
And lo ! th' uneyeable sun flames up the heavens.
Broad daylight now through all the winding glens
Is flowing river-like, but with no sound ;
And there are goings on of human life
In hut and shieling and in woodland bower,
On the green pastures and the yellow sands ;
And from the high cliff the deer-stalker sees
And hears the coble of the fisherman
Glancing and clanking, as she scarcely seems
To move o'er the still water sleepily,
From her stern almost level with the light
Letting her long net drop into the sea.

Harmonious all as music ! For the soul,
Creative in the power of her delight,
Painter and Poet, though she knows it not,—
Believing all that crowd of images
That o'er the mountains swarm or on the main
To appertain by their appropriate right
To dead insensate Nature, while in truth
From the divinity within us born,
From life to death they fluctuate evermore,—
Mistakes her inward thoughts for outward things,
And erring in her blest simplicity,
By dreams thus glorifies the universe !

Morven ! this magic lies upon thee now,
Imagination, she it is who bathes

With blue celestial as an angel's eyes
Thy cloud-sustaining depths which she calls Heaven!
By many an intermediate link of thought
She joins that frowning family of rocks
In strange relationship, till on the edge
Of the flat moor, that moss-enshrouded cairn,
Where heroes that once fought with Fingal sleep,
Is felt one with the skyey pinnacle
Round which that speck—it is an eagle—soars.
Silent in nature all thy waterfalls,
For distance makes them dumb as wreaths of snow;
But in Imagination's ear they sound
Thundrous for ever in the wilderness.
Where now are all thy rivers? In black woods
Night-hidden flow they through the blazing morn,
Or their imprisoned foam is only seen
By the fleet merlin shrieking 'twixt the crags
That topple o'er the turmoil far below.
But she beholdeth and she heareth all
The dazzling and the din, the flowing peace,
The leaping fury; hers the glory, when
Sunshiny rivers set the straths on fire;
And hers the gloom, when sullen as the grave
Their blackness bears upon its serpent bulk
No image, but of the huge thunder-cloud
That makes the earth as grim as its own heaven.

Morven belongs now wholly to the morn;
And morn's sole sovereign, the almighty Sun,
Surveys his kingdom with a regal eye,
On the blue, broad, and braided firmament
Throned, while his cloud-retinue hovering hangs
In idol-worship round the fount of light—
King call him not, he is indeed a god!

Look o'er the edge of the bare precipice!
Forgotten are the mountains; and your heart
Quakes and recoils, as dizzying down and down
Ventures your eyesight, often shut in fear,
Nor daring to become familiar
With that strange world withdrawing from your gaze,
Most awful in its still profundity,
Nor of this steadfast earth! Why tremble so?
Hold by the rock, lest wild imaginings

Do tempt you headlong o'er the battlements
Plumb down to undiscoverable death.
Unto the bottom of that blind abyss,
What a terrific distance from the sky!
There might the floating eagle's self feel fear!
But, look again, and with a steadied gaze;
And lo! the dangerous is the beautiful,
The beautiful indeed the true sublime.
What an abyss of glorious poetry!
All that seemed mist and vapour like a shroud
In the dim dawning and the clearing morn,
In daylight is pure air. No—'tis not air,
Transparent though it be, and glimmering too
As gossamer by heat spun out of light,
A fine web yielding to the insect's wing;
The solid earth was ne'er so shadowy—
It is—it is—the liquid element,
An arm of the great Sea!

A Highland Loch!

Loch-Sunart! who, when tides and tempests roar,
Comes in among these mountains from the main,
'Twixt wooded Ardnamurchan's rocky cape
And Ardmore's shingly beach of hissing spray;
And while his thunders bid the Sound of Mull
Be dumb, sweeps onwards past a hundred bays
Hill-sheltered from the wrath that foams along
The mad mid-channel,—all as quiet they
As little separate worlds of summer dreams,—
And by storm-loving birds attended up
The mountain-hollow, white in their career
As are the breaking billows, spurns the Isles
Of craggy Carnich, and green Oronsay
Drenched in that sea-born shower o'er tree-tops driven,
And ivied stones of what was once a tower
Now hardly known from rocks—and gathering might
In the long reach between Dungallan caves
And Point of Arderinis ever fair
With her Elysian groves, bursts through that strait
Into another ampler inland sea;
Till, lo! subdued by some sweet influence,—
And potent is she though so meek the Eve,—
Down sinketh wearied the old Ocean
Insensibly into a solemn calm,—

And all along that ancient burial-ground
(Its kirk is gone), that seemeth now to lend
Its own eternal quiet to the waves,
Restless no more, into a perfect peace
Lulling and lulled at last, while drop the airs
Away as they were dead, the first risen star
Beholds that lovely archipelago,
All shadowed there as in a spiritual world,
Where time's mutations shall come nevermore !

In prime of day such now Loch-Sunart's sleep.
The loch is there, but where the water-line
Is lying, that mysterious multitude
Of images in their confusion rich
Beyond the domes of sleep, pile below pile
Descending and descending, disarray
Fantastic were not the whole pomp sublime,
Conceals from sight, so that the beauty seems
All of one element, nor Wonder finds
An end of wondering, nor Love end of love,
Gazing together down the abyss divine.

Though none on earth, there is a breath in heaven ;
That airy architecture all at once
Changes from palaces to ships ; a fleet
With all sails set is waiting for the wind,
A fair wind to the isles of Paradise,
Bound thither for a freight of golden joys,
On hope's first voyage o'er the untried deep.
That fleet hangs still—but, lo ! yon single ship
This moment hath slipped anchor, and with flags,
Like flying serpents that devour the air,
Brightening the blue above her snow-white wings,
As if a condor suddenly took flight
Boldly she beareth from the bay, her prow
Enamoured of the orient, far away,
Out of sight almost, ere you think farewell,
And now sunk in the sun.
A dream ! a dream !

VISION SECOND.

THE NAIAD.

Our waking is like sleep, our sleep like waking,
One undivided undisturbed delight.
So let us visionaries on the plumes
Of our strong dream descend, and as we sink
In such sweet fear as only serves to give
A stronger power to fancy, admire the flowers
Rock-loving Spring doth sprinkle o'er the sides
Of the black precipice all the fathoms down
That vast abyss, profusely sowing them
In constellations round the merlin's nest.
The spirit knows no gross impediments
In dreams; but like a thing aërial
She sinks, and soars, and glides, and floats away
Delighted, her delight none witnessing,
O'er heaven and earth; nor doth she fear the depths
Of the old sunless sea, but visiteth
The kingdoms of the coral, whose groves need
Nor sun, nor moon, nor stars, nor any light,
Alien to their own meteorous waves,
By night as clear as day; where under roofs
Of purple and of crimson, shining warm
Above the gentle yellow of the sands,
To Tritons trumpeting on wreathèd shells
Their limb-electrifying melodies
The green-haired Nereids dance, and dancing sing
Songs heard by seamen on their midnight watch,
Who fondly dream it is the Mermaid's voice
Hymning their gallant ship, till fancy sees
The lovely creature sitting on a cape,
Just then a league-long line of moonshine streaming
All o'er some palmy isle, that, as a cloud
Eclipses the great planet, silently
Unnamed for ever sinks into the main.

Alighting on this small green circular mound
In this copsewood, beside the broken roof
Of this deserted shieling, where of old
Some goatherd used to live, let us collect
Our scattered dreams, like rays, and pour them all

Into one splendour on Loch-Unimore!
And hath Loch-Sunart melted into air,
With all his capes and isles? No! in the sun
He lies beyond that mountain, many a league
Stretched far and wide in his magnificence;
But arms innumerous the sea-giant hath,
And each, in course of ages, for itself,
Has scooped a glen out of the living rocks,
By waves with tempests working and with tides,
And mountain-torrents, and one river large,
Preparing regions for the abode of calms;
And beauty nowhere owes to ocean
A lovelier haunt than this! Loch-Unimore!
A name in its wild sweetness to our ear
Fitly denoting a dream-world of peace!

A visionary semblance of a boat,
Its sails expanding on the sunshine! Lo!
A boat it is—a pinnace beautiful
As that in which of old Parthenopex
Sailed to enjoy the Queen of Fairy Land.
There is a bright confusion of two boats,
Hulls, masts, and sails and rigging; but a breeze
Comes rustling from the woods, and creeping blue
O'er the faint-agitated waters, now
There is but one, and she her wings doth shiver,
Impatient as a swan to stem the loch,
Away up to the far head of the glen.
Call her the NAIAD, for upon her prow
You see some cunning carver has contrived,
With the dark cedar of her polished deck
Quaint contrast, ivory image of a nymph
Bare to the waist, and veiled her lightsome limbs
With sedges green, and water-lilies fair,
The large white leaves with delicate yellow tinged;
When bends the windward-beating bowsprit, plunged
In freshened beauty, like a living thing,
The lustrous creature in the foam she loves.

Built was that bark in some far foreign land;
So tells her fine and fairy workmanship,
And latine sails high-hoisted elegant;
Oft graceful gliding on her voyages
Of pleasure, music playing all the while,

New her light tackling, o'er the tideless sea
Mediterranean, that beholds with pride
A thousand cities glittering on her breast,
By sunny calms beloved, and gentle gales,
In the perpetual absence of all storms.
Such child of sunny seas the NAIAD seems,
By some mysterious wafting hither borne
Into a Highland loch of Caledon,
Without or crew or pilot, all unstained
By winds or waves the silver purity
Of her tall sails; no speck upon the glow
That runs along her sides in streaks of gold.

A stately figure on the beach, with plumes
High-nodding, and in garb majestical,
Such as a Chief upon the mountain wears,
When on commemorative festival
For some great battle fought and won, he moves
To many-echoed martial minstrelsy,
At head of his own clan. Lightly on board,
Like one of the bold children of the deep,
Leaping, he for a moment eyes the sails
Cut with a master's skill, and raking masts,
With a proud smile; and then with mellow cheers
Uplifts the clouds, and over them lets loose
The meteors, just as tide-borne singing up
Comes the fresh sea-breeze, with a flight of gulls;
And all at once escaping from the calm
Of which the NAIAD was impatient,
With smooth glide first, and then with many a bound
Capricious, the gay creature in her pride,
Along the woods flies right before the wind,
Steadying her motion to the beautiful,
On joyful voyage of discovery
Up that cliff-strait well to her Pilot known,
Who at the helm is sitting in a dream
Of infancy and boyhood, these sweet waves
Beyond all other waves that ever flowed
By him beloved—his own Loch-Unimore.

Whence comes he? From the shadow of what isle,
Or city of the sea? For heretofore
That wild bark never with these mountain winds

Dallied, nor in that sunshine streamed aloft
Her bright emblazonry, with stars and moons
And crescents decked, and many symbols strange
Wrought in the changeful silk, whose colours fine
Their radiance shift to faintest shadows, wrought
Perchance by lovely lady's hands; for he
Who at the helm sits, is most beautiful
Of mortal men. So felt that Island-Queen,
Now pining many thousand leagues away,
For his ship unreturning, when she saw
Bearing majestic the green bough of peace
That form advance before his warriors,
And lay it at her feet; while all at once
From wonder love came thrilling; and to charm
The prince of that winged palace, the Isle-Queen
Did lead herself the choral dances on,
In many a maze the graceful multitude
Swimming along below the torch-like stars,
And moon, in those climes a mild globe of fire;
Forgetful the Sea-rover in the light
Of those voluptuous eyes, of all life else;
Nor ever came across the palm-tree-shade
Brightened with bliss, one solitary thought
Of a pale face by far Loch-Unimore!

On his own loch once more the chieftain sails;
And shifting oft her courses (for one hour
In that great hollow, many-glen'd, the wind
Blows never from the same point steadily),
The NAIAD in the fiercening foam her prow
Buries, and deeply gunwale in, careers
In the blast's eye, contemptuous of the squall
That black as night and quick as lightning
Makes the spray spin above her fearless flags
That, as she stoops unto the hurricane,
One moment brush the billows, and the next
High up in air are streamering the sky.
That powerful helmsman holds the winds in fee;
They are his slaves, and in their howling rage
The NAIAD in her beauty bear along,
Now on her starboard tack most beautiful
Scorning the shelter of the cliffs, and bright
As flying sunshine cross the loch that lies
Pitch-black, the very foam-wreaths sullenly

Expiring in the gloom that shrouds the waves.
In wonder on the gliding Glory gaze
Shepherd and huntsman on the hills—the eagle,
Poised miles-high 'mid the clouds, the NAIAD sees,
And rifle by the plumèd helmsman's side ;
While upward turns the Chieftain his proud eye
In search of the Bird-royal, as a scream
Directs it to a speck within the sun.
The spirit of the region fills with pride
The Chieftain's heart ; for are they not his own,
Those dim blue glens, those shadowy mountains, all
Those radiant ranges of sun-smitten cliffs ;
That meadowed plain as green as emerald,
With its wide river, of the cataracts
Forgetful now, calm flowing to the loch,—
The loch, or call it what it is, the sea ;
And lo ! outstanding from that sylvan height,
He hails the Castle of his ancestors,
And all its hoary towers.

The NAIAD glides
'Twixt two huge rocks, time immemorial called
The Giants ; idle all at once her sails
Hang in the airlessness ; around her masts
Drop down the twining flags ; her bowsprit sheds
Asunder the soft branches on the bank
Of that deep bay, an amphitheatre
Of loveliest groves ; already is she moored
To an old ivied stump, well known of old ;
But up to his own castle of the cliff
Why fly not the winged feet of Unimore ?
It was but now he did affront the light
With forehead fierce in its ancestral pride
Beneath a Chieftain's plumes. But all at once,
Like deer by far-off hound-yell terrified,
He bursts into the wood. Sun-proof the Den,
All matted thick with briery tanglement
Like Indian jungle where the tiger growls,
That now doth harbour Morven's mountain-lord ;
Sea-rover call him—pirate—buccaneer.
To bathe the burning forehead of remorse
In the chill water of some sunless fount,
Seeks he that savage penitentiary !

VISION THIRD.

THE LADY OF THE CASTLE.

Meridian reigns o'er heaven, and earth, and sea ;
With a glad voice the streamy valleys sing
Their songs unto the mountains, and the crags
Fling down their joy into the dells profound ;
The croaking raven happy up aloft
As on its broomy knoll the bleating lamb.
In their own world of breezy solitude
Float in fair flocks the gentle clouds along,
In changeful beauty of soft-shaded snow
That drops no flake, diffusing o'er the wide
Expanse of air and ether, all one blue,
Coolness delightful, such as ever dwells
Among the glades of an umbrageous wood.

But why so mournful Castle-Unimore?
One huge dark shadow in the light, it seems
Disconsolate, as if its dreary towers
Would not be comforted, and in their woe
Of desolate desertion, sullenly
The sun repelling with a frown of scorn.
Tomb-like it stands in its black grove of pines ;
A grove that bears on its majestic growth
The silence and the storms of centuries ;
Yet see ! its plain-like summit half-way lies,
And hardly half-way, with its heronry
Between the rock-base and the battlements,
Breaking, but lessening not the regal height.

What aileth the old castle? Not of yore
Thus was she wont, in the refulgent day
To look as gloomy as some burial-place,
As silent. Rising o'er the mountain-top
Oft did the sun behold her glorious,
With bright broad banners waiting for the wind,
And heard her pipes a-dinning mid the dawn
The Gathering of the clans ; while plaid and plume
Came issuing from the mists, and formed array
Heroic, on the greensward esplanade
Flung up in front of all her iron towers

By some strong earthquake. Castle-Unimore
Was then the heart of Morven, and it beat
So high in pride, that the remotest glens
Were gladdened, and the deer upon the hill
Went belling fiercely, even as if they knew
Their forest chase belonged unto a chief
Whom all the Highlands loved, and chosen bards
Did celebrate the Brave and Beautiful,
Of war the Whirlwind, and the Calm of peace.

He died! Where? On the bloody sand. And how?
Thrust through by many bayonets—by hoofs
Trampled of that oft-charging cavalry,
That under cover of the cannonade
Came whirlwind-like among the clouds of smoke,
And laid a line of lofty plumage low
To wave no more, and many a noble face
All featureless and blind unto the sun
Left ghastly. With the chieftain all his clan
Perished, all but a few red broken waves
That, tempest-driven, and scattered into spray,
Seemed from the battle-sea to disappear!

The Lily of Lochaber, so his bride,
The morning she was brought by Unimore
To the bright glens of Morven, by the clan
Had lovingly been named,—and still the name
Belonged to her, though the tall stalk was broken,
The leaf pale, and flower faded—hung her head,
Just like a lily trodden under foot,
That lives and still is fair among the moss,
But daily dimmer in its withering.
All feared that she would die; but from the dust
Springeth the crushed flower, by pure dews benign
Encouraged and empowered once more to face
The sun, and wave her lovely locks in heaven.
Out of the castle's long-unopened gate
Again she walked forth in her widowhood
Down the Great Glen up which she came a bride,
And by her steps there walked the gallant boy
Called the Cliff-Climber, for his passion was
To be with the young eagles in the clouds.
Morven beheld again her Unimore;
And glad was she that for the scythe of War
That flower had been unripe, or on that day

In far-off fight he with his Sire had stood,
And with his Sire had fallen.

Years on years
Past by, and he became a stately tree,
Conspicuous from afar, beneath whose shade
Sat Safety; and the clan, to strength restored,
Round Castle-Unimore their battle-cry
Awoke again, and all their war-pipes yelled,
Drowning the waterfalls, Revenge, revenge!
But a strange son was he of such a sire!
Moody and wild, and with large restless eyes
Coal-black and lamping, through the loneliest woods
He took to wandering by himself, by night
More than by day, and out of savage caves
Was sometimes seen to issue, when the storm
Mist-driving swept the howling precipice.
Different but undegenerate from his sires,
His soul was not with Morven. From her cliffs,
Like strong-winged Osprey looking out for prey,
Stone-still one moment, and the next light-swift,
He gazed afar, and wished those plumes were his
Which through the skies go sughing; that in him
Might be fulfilled the ancient prophecy
Sung by the Seer in the wilderness,
"That from his eyrie built on Unimore
(One name to castle, mountain, moor, and loch),
Would fly forth the Sea-Eagle o'er the isles;
And home-returning after many suns,
Would fold awhile among his native cliffs,
Fresh-imped and full of flight his glorious wings;
Till driven away by some calamity
Cloud-hidden as the unborn hurricane,
His broad vans from the mountain-top uplifting
The Bird once more his airy life would wheel
Far o'er the sea-rim, and when ocean
Had girdled been by his victorious flight,
Return would he, dim generations dead,
And perish somewhere, all his plumage torn
And rotten in old age, among the cliffs
Whence first he shot and sounded through the sky!"

One summer-dawn all by himself he sailed
Away in his small skiff, and never more
Was seen in Morven. Passion for the sea,

By the black billows and the hollow winds,
Had on that loch been blown into the heart
Of one by nature for adventures born
Perilous and far; and in delirium
Of wild imagination stormwards borne
Into the howling bosom of the main,
The mountaineer no beauty in his glens
Saw, stretched afar in their still steadfastness;
But saw all beauty in the glens afloat
When seas are running mountains high, and ships
Descending and ascending gloriously,
Dallying with danger and in love with death.

Bound for an Indian isle, a ship of war
Sailed, the Saldanha, and young Unimore
From the mast-head surveyed a glorious sea
With new stars crowded, lustrous far beyond
The dim lights of his native clime. His soul
Had its desire, when, blowing steadily,
The breezes of the tropics filled her sails
Propitious, and the joyful vessel seemed
At her own will to steer her own lone way
Along her own dominion; or when calms
Enchained her with her shadow in the sun,
As for a day of Sabbath rest,—or when
The black blast all at once her snow-white sails
Smote, till she laid her streamered glory down
Almost on level with the deep, then rose
Majestically back into the storm,
And through the roar went roaring, not a reef
Ta'en in, for well did the Saldanha love
To see the lambent lightning sport and play
Round her top-gallant, while a cataract
Of foam, split by her prow, went rolling by
Her flashing sides, and league-long in her wake
Tumulted the ocean.

Many a widowed tear
His Lady-mother shed for him in vain.
For after dismal silence filled with dreams,
Uncertain rumours flew from port to port,
And penetrated, like the plague, to homes
Among the mountain-depths—She had gone down,
'Twas said, at sea, gone down with all her crew.
Drift-wood picked up upon the Indian shore

Told the Saldanha's death; and savages,
Fierce Malays, with their creeses, boarding there
A native trader, other weapons showed
That once belonged to that ill-fated ship.
Rumours ere long were rife of mutineers
Scuttling the ship, and that her boats were seen
When she was sinking, making for the shore
In spite of all her shrieks—but dismal tales
Fly fast and far, still gathering misery,
Reddening with fouler blood-streaks, till the eyes
Of horror have been feasted, and her ears
Sated with crime and death!

But never more
Was the Saldanha heard of, nor her crew—
Forgotten the lost ship with all her ghosts.

Night-like blank blindness fell upon the soul
Of her, the childless widow, black as death.
So lay she motionless for two long years,
Nor saw nor heard one living thing, the grave
Not stiller, nor the bones that lie therein.
But wondrous is the principle of life,
And she lived on. She breathed, and breathed, and breathed;
And sometimes from her hollow breast she drew,
So said the watchers, a heart-breaking sigh
From a heart broken, lengthening piteously
As if it ne'er would end. But some new change
Took place within her brain, and she awoke
One morning with unclouded memory,
And said, "I know our Unimore is drowned!"

Then came long years of hope, of dismal hope,
Dying one day, and on another bright
As madness; for imagination dreams
Of wild impossibilities, and love
Will borrow for a time the eagle's wings
To sweep the isles and rocks, and finding not
What she seeks there, the long-lost beautiful,
Goes down into the caverns of the sea,
Commanding them to render up their dead.
So fared it with this lady—and a ship
Sometime she saw come sailing up the loch,
And called on all the castle to behold

Her Unimore's return. Then with a smile
Pressing her pale hand on her forehead wan,
Of God she asked forgiveness, and knelt down
Into a sobbing prayer.

On tales she fed
Of battle and of shipwreck, and of boats
Like insect-covered leaves for weeks afloat
On the wide sea, all dropping one by one
The famished sailors, some delirious,
From the frail bark—and of more horrid dooms!
In all his shapes she madly cursed the sea;
Yet all the while life held her Unimore.
The sea was innocent of his decease;
Falsely of that sin hath she accused the waves;
The shoals and rocks are guiltless, though they love
Beneath the vessel's keel to lurk, when she
Seems in immortal beauty sailing on,
Yet in the sunshine by the coral cliff
Smitten with sudden death. Her curses fall
In idle agony against the winds,
Though they the storm-proof cables vainly called
Do split like gossamer, when some anchored ship,
As by a sun-stroke smitten by a storm,
Drifts shorewards on to wreck; or by a cloud,
A lurid cloud, no bigger at the first
Than a man's hand—for so in tropic climes
The threatening hurricane lours in heaven—
Death-doomed, ere evening shows her golden star.

So dragged the dreary years. Sometimes in dreams,
As guilt knows well, and grief, and misery,
An apparition, like an angel, comes
Gliding from heaven, with her relieving hands
To lift the leaden burden from our breast;
When all at once her dewy eyes grow dim,
Fades her celestial face, her figure melts
Into thin air, and, waking in our woe,
Our souls are more than ever desolate.
Even so with her who now bewailed the dead!
Oft Resignation like an angel came,
Obedient to her prayer; but in an hour,
Unwilling any longer to abide
On earth with that poor child of misery,
With mournful beckonings she disappeared

Away to heaven—and sometimes in the gloom,
Her aspect and her bearing underwent
To those distracted eyes a mortal change
At once into Despair!

O'er Morven's glen
Did Superstition breathe her misty dreams;
And all their phantoms into that dim faith
In which Love, Grief, and Fear will comfort find,
When Hope itself is buried in the sea,
By all the dwellers in the wilderness
Were passionately embraced. Nor think it strange
The Spiritual should have its separate worlds.
In the clear sunbright and unhaunted sky
That canopies the common earth, it sees
All it believes; there seems no mystery
In blade or leaf, in dewdrop or in flower,
And our unquestioning souls are satisfied.
But through the outer air our arrowy eyes
Pierce, and Religion shows the Invisible
To spirit more apparent than the earth,
Which spurning we forget, nor know it is;
And sometimes through those self-same regions goes
Imagination, on her own wild wings,
And with her own wild eyes disturbing all
She dreams or looks on, till with ghosts are rife
The visionary kingdoms of the air,
And God's dominion made most terrible;
To Superstition doth Religion turn,
Into a curse a blessing, or at best
A dreary, dim, delirious comforting,
In which the paths sublime of Providence,
That run in great lines, black, or bright, or broken,
Magnificent along the mighty sky,
Are brought down from the Region to the earth
Where we poor wretches crawl, and all confused
Into a moaning, mean bewilderment,
We cry, "Behold! believe the scheme of God!"

No wonder, dreaming of her Unimore,
Of life, of death, of burial, of a corpse
Sunk in the sands or weltering on the waves,
Or in the desert dust a skeleton,
Or lying mangled with those beauteous limbs
Where round their great fires dance the cannibals;

No wonder the heart-broken maniac saw,—
And though she knew it not, at times she was
Indeed a maniac,—saw whatever sights
Her soul in its delirium chose to see ;
That in recoil from its worst agonies
It sank away in superstitious dreams
Idle and fond, yet not unlovely oft
And all aërial, nature's poetry
When Inspiration breathes on lonely Grief.
From Linnhe-Loch unto the Hebride isles
Strange tales were floating of young Unimore
Seen in his skiff by moonlight, all alone
But for one lady singing at his side
Music that warbled like the voice of shells ;
And wonder-loving Fancy called the shape,
Melodious in its fleeting beauty dim,
The Lady of the Sea !

O weak of faith !
Who, in that desolation of her soul,
Turned not to God, and to the Son of God,
And in their Word found joy. She turned to both,
Prostrate ; but both refused to hear her cry.
From the deaf earth, and the remorseless sea,
Her misery now asked nothing ; but of heaven
She asked for peace ; and there did come from heaven
No answer : then she prayed imploringly
For death, and stronger in her bosom burned
The fire of life ; all prayers were heard but hers ;
Of all poor creatures she alone was left
To pine unpitied with a broken heart !
She clasped, she kissed, and when that she could weep,
With tears she washed the crucifix ; but cold,
Oh ! cold and hard to lip and bosom now
That image ! whose dear touch, once so divine,
Did fill her soul with bliss ineffable.
Then of God's very being, and His Son's,
Doubt grew out of despair. The Merciful
Was but a name—a mockery ; Jesus' self
A mortal man, no more ; the Bible black
With drear delusion ; and the narrow house
Appointed for all living, dismal name
The grave ! what was it but an earthern dark,
Vain tears aye swallowing up, and vainer prayers,

Still drenched and still insatiate; from whose jaws
Ne'er shall the dust, misnamed a soul, arise.

O mortal man! whose troubled days are few,
And yet can hold within their little span
Unnumbered miseries; or with one wild woe,
As if it were a ghost no spell can lay,
Not even the cross of Christ, may day and night
Be haunted, till the dreariness of time
Doth seem eternity; condemn not her
Who in her sore distraction thus denied
Her Saviour! He beside the throne in heaven,
Did pity her for whom on earth He died,
And sent two blessed spirits at her bed
To minister! Of mortal mould were they,
But innocent as saints, as angels fair.
And when, out of the windows of the cell
Of its insanity, her stricken soul
Looked on their heavenly faces and their eyes,
After a little while, dismay subsiding
Into sweet awe, and awe into delight,
And then delight into exceeding love,
It was made whole! Then did Religion,
Like a scared dove returning to her nest,
Glide back into the silence of her heart.
Into diviner holiness revived
All thoughts that had been holy, and all things
That had been sacred into sanctity
More sacred still; and, as upon her knees,
Weeping she sank before the Crucifix
Between her daughters—so she still did call
The duteous beings—all the Saints in heaven
Rejoiced to hear them at their orisons.

VISION FOURTH.

THE SISTERS.

Two spirits at the childless widow's bed,
Childless no more, have by the pitying heavens
Been sent to minister; and where do they,
In hut or shieling, in the central gloom
Of woods, or on the mountain's secret top

Now linger? With bright rays of happiness,
Kindling a fire upon the poor man's hearth,
Or lending lustre unto nature's light,
Unto her shade a sweeter pensiveness?
For life and nature love their presence; life
Relieved by the white hands of charity,
And nature in her desert places made
Beneath their eyes to blossom like the rose!

Lo! down the glen they come, the long blue glen
Far off enveloped in aërial haze
Almost a mist, smooth gliding without step,
So seems it, o'er the greensward, shadow-like,
With light alternating, till hand in hand
Upon a knoll, distinctly visible,
The sisters stand awhile, then lay them down
Among a weeping birch-tree's whisperings,
Like fawns, and fix their mild eyes steadfastly
Upon the clouded loch!

One face is pale
In its own pensiveness, but paler seems
Beneath the nun-like braidings of that hair
So softly black, accordant with the calm
Divine that on her melancholy brow
Keeps deepening with her dreams! The other bright,
As if in ecstasies, and brighter glows
In rivalry of all those sun-loved locks,
Like gold wire glittering, in the breath of joy
Afloat, on her smooth forehead momently
Kindling with gladder smile-light. Those dark eyes!
With depths profound, down which the more you gaze,
Stiller and stiller seems the spiritual world
That lies sphered in their wondrous orbs, beyond
New thoughtful regions opening far beyond,
And all imbued with the deep hush of heaven.
There quiet clouds, there glimpses quieter
Of stainless ether, in its purity
There a lone star! But other eyes are swimming
With such a lovely, such a loving light,
Breathed o'er their surface, imperceptible
The colour of the iris lost awhile
In its own beauty, and then all at once
Perceived to be, as some faint fleeting cloud
Doth for a moment overshadow them,

Of that same hue in which the heaven delights,
And earth religious looking up to heaven
In unwilled happiness ; when awe retires,
In some dim cave her mute solemnities
To lead along unwitnessed, and abroad
O'er hill and valley hymning as they go,
In worship of glad nature, joy and love
Stand side by side upon the mountain-top.

Them roaming o'er the wilderness the bard
Whose genius gives unto his native glens
A beauty and a glory not their own,
Peopling the mists with phantoms, the wild bard
Whom Morven, in her sacred memories
Dreaming of Ossian, aye will link with pride
To that great son of song, saw from the cliff
Whence, like an eagle from his eyrie, he
Looked in his inspiration far and wide
O'er the black heather in its purple bloom ;
And in his many-measured odes and hymns,
To sunshine calms and storms of thunder-gloom
Did celebrate their virtues, and the forms
In which they were enshrined—oh grief of griefs !
That Heaven should ever steal them from the earth !

" Like the May-Morning,"—so that Poet sang
In Gaelic lyrics untranslateable,—
" Is she the younger sister, when the sun
With dropping flowers adorns his dewy hair ;
And with a roseate robe of light, the God
Involves his silent feet how beautiful
Upon the mountains ! She the while, his bride,
Veiled with fine shadows that may not conceal
Love-blushes kindled by the genial eye
That overcomes all nature, murmurs low,
As if awaking in her innocence
From sleep into a more delightful world
Than sleep e'er dreamt, a song that sounds at first
Like that of living water from some spring
Soft, softly welling, till her virgin fears
Becalmed by her own gracious luminary,
She unreluctant meets her lord's embrace
In their still cloud-pavilion, while from woods
And cliffs, and lochs and seas, fair flights of birds
Rise circling in the air around their bliss,

And the song-gifted, nature's choristers,
In deep dells, half-way up the mountain-side,
All rustling restlessly, till earth and sky
Is music all, their hymeneal sing."

"Or look ye on the Rainbow"—so he sang
That wild-eyed bard, sole-sitting on his rock,
There haunted by all loveliest images—
"Oh! look ye on the Rainbow, in its first
Exceeding faintness, like a rising thought,
Or a fine feeling of the beautiful,
An evanescence! So you fear must be
The slight-tinged silence of the showery sky,
Nor yet dare name its name; till breathing out
Into such colours as may not deceive,
And undelusive in their heavenliness,
O'er all the hues that happy nature knows,
Although it be the gentlest of them all
Prevailing the celestial violet,
To eyes by beauty made religious, lo!
Brightening the house by God inhabited,
The full-formed rainbow glows! Beneath her arch
The glittering earth once more is paradise;
Nor sin nor sorrow hath her dwelling there,
Nor death; but an immortal happiness
For us made angels! Swifter than a dream
It fades—it flies—and we and this our earth
Are disenchanted back to mortal life;
Earth to its gloom, we to our miseries.
So may that Virgin like the Rainbow die!"

Then sang the poet—"Different as is morn
From night, with day's bright joyance dreamt between
And eve's dim meekness, yet, when summer treads
The pathway of the spring, the same in both
The spirit of pervading purity,
Their gentleness the same; even so is She,
The blue-eyed sister with the golden hair,
In beauty kindred, as in birth, with Her
Whose locks are only darker than her eyes,
Where joy resembles grief! Then image thou,
O Night! aye melancholy in thy bliss,
That raven-tressèd lady. Thou who walk'st
With silent steps the sky, then loveliest sure
For most serenely simple, when the moon

Needs no star-train to light thy visage up,
Herself, perhaps one planet burning near,
To thee, oh Night! in thy still pensiveness
Sufficient beauty for the whole of heaven!

"And there are Rainbows, lady! like to thee.
Lo! on the soft spray of the waterfall,
The lovely lunar phantom! All at once,
No warning given by some uncertain light,
The Apparition spans the black abyss,
And it is lustrous; Fancy dreams she sees
A golden palace rise; the gorgeous walls
Are pictured o'er with mosses many-dyed;
Bright as in day the clustering wild-flowers hang,
Only their glory softer; and such trees
Outstanding there in green and yellow air,
As if their leaves and branches delicate
Were of that air composed, in some sweet clime
May well be growing, where no sunshine comes,
But bathed by moonlight in perpetual peace!
That Lunar rainbow on the water-flow
Smiles, fades, and dies—and such thy doom may be."

Oh! mourn not, that in nature transitory
Are all her fairest and her loveliest things;
And frail the tenure as a web of dew
By which they hold to life. For therein lies
The might of the refulgent rose, the power
Of the pale lily's leaf. The sweetest smile
That glides along the face of innocence
Is still the saddest, and the sadness comes
From dim forebodings of an early death.
Those sudden goings-down into the grave
Of the young beautiful, do sanctify
The light surviving in the precious orbs
Of eyes permitted yet awhile to shine;
And fathers seeing in their daughters' eyes
A cloudless heaven of sweet affection,
Sometimes will shudder, as they think upon,
They know not why, a maiden's funeral!

Like shadows in the sunshine, softening all
We look on, till we love it, and revealing
Fair sights in dimness only visible,
Now fall such mournful thoughts upon the heads

Of these Twin-Orphans, and their character
Opens before us in a holier light
Congenial with their beauty, both divine.
Orphans they have been since the hour of birth;
Soon as their mother knew that they were born,
And as her eyes could see them, did she die.
Of seven bright brothers that for their country fell,
The brightest he who one short year before
Had made her his blest bride. A broken heart
She might have had; but of a broken heart
It was not that she died. Consumption preyed
On her pure blood with a low-burning fire
Unquenchable, and nature's holy law,
For sake of that sweet offspring, did allow
The beatings of her heart to linger on,
After her pulse was imperceptible,
And some feared she was dead. The infants grew,
Flowers not untended, orphans though they were,—
Their mother's mother was their guardian,—
Into the loveliest children ever seen
(Such whisper came from all who looked on them),
So like to one another in all things,
Lips, cheeks, eyes, forehead, figure, motion, voice,
That, when the one was absent, few could tell
The other's name; but when they smiling stood
Together side by side, and hand in hand,
Proud in their glee of such comparisons,
There was new beauty in the difference
Which even then was rather felt than seen,
And left to each an equal share of love.

But as the light of childhood waned away
From their expanding foreheads, the fair Twins,
No more before affection's eyes confused
In such intense similitude, stood out
In the clear air, each clothed with loveliness
Unto herself peculiar; liker still
Than other sisters, and at times as like
Almost as ever; most so when they prayed;
And wondrous like when they together sang,
Each with a white arm on the other's neck,
The gladdest words to melancholy tunes,
Or listened to some story of distress,
Or gave together alms unto the poor.

Their guardian died, and in calm grief they gazed
Upon her grave, and then looked up to heaven.
Oh! kith and kin! ye are but homely names,
Homely, and therefore holy. Few are they,
Alas! who in this hard world choose to care,
Themselves surrounded with all happiness,
Ever so little for the orphan's head.
Ice-cold the hand misnamed of Charity,
That while some common want it half relieves,
Doth chill the blood in the receiver's heart,
Making a sin of gratitude!

Rise up!
Rise up! ye Orphans, from your dreamy bliss,
Among the weeping birch-tree's whisperings,
Fair spirits of the wilderness! Oh! fair
Saints of the altar! Nature calls on you
To vindicate from wrong the human heart!
On you ne'er frowned the hard-eyed world; on you,
As soon as Love expired, did Pity fix
Her dewy eyes; and from the city's din,
The day that saw you at the funeral,
Walking and weeping, all arrayed in white,
Beside the sable pall, saw you conveyed
Wondering away to far-off Unimore!
A place, in your imagination, from this world
Seeming withdrawn, 'mid the sweet dash of waves
Familiar music grown ere daylight died.
And ere the moon had twice beheld her bow
In the calm sea, your gentle voyaging
Ceased softly in among the loveliest groves
Of woody Morven, while the anchor dropped
Down in deep water, close unto the shore,
And bound the wearied vessel to her rest,
Left by herself among reflected stars.

How sweet the smile upon the mournful face
That in the gloomy castle welcomed you,
And with no other bidding brought your lips
To meet the lips that breathed those kisses calm
Through both your hearts, ere the soft touch was gone,
O'erflowed with filial love! Ye knew not why
So sad those eyes, and why those cheeks so pale!
And yet not unacquainted, though so young,
Were ye with grief, and in your innocence

Saw further far into that lady's heart
Than ye did know in your simplicity.
In sacred memory holding still the dead,
Soon to that lady did ye both transfer
The deep affection that doth never die
On earth, when its first object goes to heaven,
But gaining power from pity, and on tears
Feeding, itself doth shed, grows every hour
In its composure fuller of delight,
And in delight all holy acts performs
Of duty, to the cold heart difficult,
As easily as it doth draw its breath,
And as unconsciously. The whole of life
As pious as the hour employed in prayer.

"She is our father's sister." That one thought,
Although your father died ere ye were born,
Stirred all your being up, till feelings flowed,
Like many a little rill from unknown springs
Trickling their way, through flowery herbage green
To one still stream that gives them all a name,
And now that name is Love.

O creatures fair!
And innocent as fair! and spiritual-bright
As innocent! oh! that your dreams were ours,
For ye communion hold with highest Heaven!

VISION FIFTH.

THE ORATORY.

They rise from dreams, and towards the Castle glide,
Across the rills, where many a lucid pool
Reflects their figures, for a moment seen
Like water-nymphs; still gathering as they go
Delight from silence, and a mutual love
From that partaken delight. By nature's joy
Their hearts have now been strengthened, and they yearn
For duty's mournful sanctities, performed
Then best, when from permitted happiness,

Her face still smiling, innocence retires
With footsteps hushed disturbing not the hush,
A cup of healing, though 'tis filled with tears
In her angelical hands, to minister
Around the bed of Grief!

This is the day,
However bright it shine in showerless heaven,
Wet in the melancholy glen below
With showers of tears, a Sabbath dedicate
To Sorrow, queen of life, who reigns o'er all;
To whom that childless mother pays her vows
Incessantly, nor worships aught beside;
But this is her great festival; ten years
Have bathed and steeped it in religion, kept
As hopeless love's own anniversary
Of her son's disappearance from her eyes
Away to some wild death. 'Tis near the hour
When she, now palsy-stricken, on her bed,
With gentlest motion will be borne along
By reverent hands unto the Oratory
Built on a consecrated rock of old,
Within a dell close to the castle-walls,
Yet of all lonesome places in this world
Most lonesome; such the depth of shaggy cliffs
Hawk-haunted, overarching; one blue glimpse
Crossed by a cloud upon the clearest day
All you can see, when gazing from below
In search of the far intercepted sky!

Wide open standeth the great Castle door,
And out into the sunshine solemnly
The still procession moves. The lady lies
Outstretched and motionless upon her bier,
With folded hands and her face up to heaven,
Clothed in white raiment like a very shroud,
Herself most like the dead. But in her eyes
The spirit of life! and blent divinely there
Another spirit, religion, piety,
That makes her pallid aspect beautiful,
And as an angel's bright. The crucifix
Is on her breast, between her withered hands
That slightly tremble—and you see her lips
Moving, as if in prayer—All else is still!
Before the bier, with long locks like the snow

A holy man is walking ; in his hand
A holy book ; the priest who all his days,
While generations have been blown away
By war in foreign lands, or in this glen
Faded in peace, within these castle walls
Hath lived, and taught unto the Shadows there
The truths eternal realised in heaven.
By each side of the bier a spirit walks,
In shape of these twin-sisters ; and they turn
At times their sad-eyed faces tenderly
To her who thereon lies, but shed no tears,
For undisturbed are they in pity's well.
And who are the bier-bearers ? Men who fought,
That fatal day her hero-husband fell,
Fast by their chief, and did oppose their breasts
To shield him from the bayonets ; but all
In vain. Their grizzled heads are bare ; the plumes,
Worn since that day in melancholy pride,
Lying somewhere in darkness ; on they go,
Aged, but strong, and with a stately step
Subdued by pity and sorrow ; such a step
As long ago, to them but yesterday,
They walked with, bearing from the battle-field
The body of their chieftain, while a pipe,
One solitary pipe, on foreign shores,
Sounded the coronach of Unimore.

The long straight avenue of old elm-trees
Cathedral-roofed, the bier hath passed along,
And down the greensward slope that gently dips
Into that variegated valley rich
With lowland culture, southwards flowing free ;
And while from doors and windows of the huts
Look pitying faces out, the Roe-wood hides
The slow procession, on an ancient road
Cleared by the hunters down the dim descent
Conducting to the pass into the glen.
There in that wildered place of shattered rocks
Dinning with lonely waterfalls, the path
Green at the base of the black precipice
It follows without pause ; and underneath
A narrow slip of sky cut off by cliffs,
A solitude within a solitude,
That holy man, with his long locks of snow,
Still leading on the Dream, it now ascends

A flight of steps cut in the living stone,
Up to an isle-like sylvan eminence,
And with a hush of reverence, every head
A moment bowed in prayer, it entereth slow
The sacred stillness of the Oratory;
And with exceeding gentleness, the bier,
On which the lady seems to be asleep,
And in her sleep to smile, is now set down
Before the Altar!

"Ye in Heaven that dwell,
Created yet unfallen, hierarchies
Blissful as bright, yet in beatitude
Consummate and immortal, looking down
With pity far profounder than is known
On earth, upon the grief and guilt of earth,—
Angels! with all your eyes most merciful
Oh! now regard that bier! And oh! ye saints
Whose mortal garments here the scorching fire
Consumed! And ye whose agonisèd flesh
The arrows pierced! And ye who underwent
All dreadful dyings unimaginable!
Oh! ye on whom mysterious Providence
Conferred a boon implored not in your prayers,
A long still life of sanctity! Behold
One like yourselves, when in this dim sojourn
You wept! Oh! then, take pity on her tears!
For hers is faith, and hope, and charity;
And humble is she as a little child;
But in our best affections here below
Lurks sin that taints them all, and she who lies,
O sinless Saints! before you on that bier,
Palsied, and yielding unto all decrees
Perfect submission in her piety,
Yet is her mother-heart rebellious, thronged
With blind repinings, and a ghost disturbs
Her spirit, even at the Confessional,
Standing between her and the peace of God!
O Mother mild! who, while the angels sang
Among the midnight stars o'er Bethlehem,
Thy Divine Babe didst in the manger lay,
And feel that place despised the heart of heaven!
Thou who, upon the Mount of Calvary,
Didst faint not, hearing a voice sweetly say,
'Woman, behold thy son!' On Thee we call

Pity to show unto a mother's grief,
Supported not as thou wert, though her heart
Doth long, and yearn, and burn within her, all
In vain, for reconcilement to her doom!
And Thou, who diedst for sinners! we do pray
Even unto Thee, that thou wouldst pity her,
And, pitying, pardon, and forgive her sin,
And the sins of us all! Thou biddest us,
And tell'st us how, in words from thine own lips,
Of Him, our Father, to ask, which is in heaven,
And that it shall be given! To Him we kneel,—
We wretched sinners all,—to Him who sits
Upon the Throne, with Thee at His right hand,
In light ineffable and full of glory;
And, although dust we be, and unto dust
Return, yet all who do believe His Word
Shall see His face, for them death lose his sting,
The grave its victory!"

The Holy Man
Stoops down, and from that spectre's hands doth take,
For they are powerless both, the crucifix,
And puts it to her lips. The pale lips give
A kiss unto salvation's mystic sign;
And, though tears drop not, there is in her eyes
A dimness as of tears, a swimming smile!
Words there are none, nor have there been for years.
God hath allowed her grief to take away
The power of speech; yet were it now restored,
Mute would she be; for resignation breathes
A wordless calm all through a soul alive
With thoughts and feelings, inexpressible
But in the language saints may use in heaven!

All Heaven be with her now! Angels and Saints!
The Holy, Holier, and the Holiest!
For, mercy-sent, a dreadful trial comes!
Darkening the daylight blue without the door,
In gorgeous garb, a stately Figure stands,
With plumes that touch the portal; on the bier
His shadow falls, and as her eyes behold
The beauteous Apparition terrible,
Springs to her feet the unpalsied mother, healed
By miracle, before the eyes of all
Fear-stunned, and stretching forth her hungry arms,

With gaze and gasp devouring him, shrieks out,
"The sea gives up its dead! My son! my son!"

Out in the open air, upon its bier,
The body lies; and all believe it dead.
But down the glen there comes a mighty wind,
Uplifting all the woods, and life returns
Beneath the holy coolness fresh from heaven.
"Where am I, children? God is merciful;
And have we met within His courts at last?
Alas! I see our mortal Oratory,
And we are yet on earth! I had a dream;
My son did fill it all, my undrowned son;
No unsubstantial phantom mocked my arms;
I felt, I clasped, I kissed him, and his lips
Were warm with love and life. But God is good,
And merciful exceedingly; with hymns,
With hymns and psalms making sweet melody—
And I will join the strain,—Bless ye the Lord!"

Awe-struck, they see and hear the miracle!
Yet are not all things both in heaven and earth
Miraculous? The murmur of the bee,
The flower on which it feeds; the angel's song,
And on his brows the blooms of Amaranth!
Strange mysteries lie asleep within our souls,
And haply ne'er are wakened; but at times—
Some wondrous times, when passion, in its power,
Rends up our being like an earthquake shock
From its foundations, these strange mysteries
Walk out among the dust, and terrify
The very regions wherein they were born,
As if, in Nature, supernatural!

The Mother's eyes have recognised her Son,
And know that on him rests the certain light
Of real life, undreamt and stationary
In undeceiving bliss! Embraces there
Are given from breast to breast, from lip to lip
Kisses, so overcharged with ecstasies,
Each moment's touch to her maternal soul
Reward celestial, more than might suffice
For entire ages dragged through misery.
That sacred greed may not be satisfied
Of famished Love! Like prisoner from some cell,

Where underground he was an hungered, brought,
And, clothed in purple, set down at a feast
There to regale with kings! Oh! rather say,
As by the wafting of a wing set down
In his own house, where at their frugal fare,
His wife and children unforgetful sigh
For him, far off a lonely prisoner,
Among them dropping suddenly from heaven!

"Lift up the bier!" And now the Glen beholds
A changed procession, underneath the cliffs
Returning to the Castle. All is bright
That was so dim before; those long white locks
Seem almost now diffusing cheerfulness,
As the old priest still reverently precedes
The bier that sunny looks in its own light.
Serenely step, and with a smothered pride,
The bearers, seeing in his stately son
The sire revived, for whom of yore they bled.
And list! a hymn! a melancholy hymn!
In its excess of worship melancholy!
For with one impulse, at one mutual look,
Take up the sisters a thanksgiving song,
The sweetest of the songs of Israel,
With now and then by inspiration changed
Into a deeper pathos some small word,
Appropriate more to their own gratitude,
More finely breathing their religious joy!

To their high chamber in the Western tower
The sisters go—the old priest to his cell—
And in the castle's heart, its very core,
Mother and son are left unto themselves,
Guarded by silence and by solitude,
Those sacred watchers ever faithful found,
And to disturb them were impiety
To nature's holiest passions, Love and Joy,
And their companion Grief!

Ye mountain-tops!
Impatient though ye be, await the time
For your rejoicing. Then the startled moon
Will quite forget her feeble stars, when she
Beholds a hundred beacon-blazes burst
From sea to sea. 'Tis not the fiery cross

That Lewis Swiftfoot now, the huntsman, bears.
Ere shines the star of evening, all the glens
Of Morven shall have heard that Unimore
Is in his castle, that the lovely sea
Has spared his life, and sent them back their chief
To be once more the glory of his clan.
"Away, ye laggards, o'er the broomy braes
And valleys where the Sassenach's self might bide.
My feet are for the heather-bent, my face
Is to the mountains!"

Soon he drops the tale
Along Loch-Conich's solitary shores
That on the precipices smile of Black
Ben-Hun the eagle-breeder, here and there
'Midst the dwarf oaks a hut; and carries it
O'er Ariena's tumbling torrents, up
Sweet Ulladilla's dell, into the gorge
Of high Glen-Ulin, where the wild-deer lie.
And then among the clustering cottages
Almost a village, on the pastoral stream
That takes its soft name from its native loch,
(Loch-Avon! only visited by dreams
In its cliff region inaccessible),
Slackening his flight while eftsoons he drops
Down the long forest glen of Achnagoun
That idle seems though thickly strewn with life;
And round the bays of lovely Loch-Aline
Diffuses the strange tidings, till they flow,
Strong mountain music gathered from the glens,
Around the turrets of Aldtornish Castle
That rock-like points the bold Peninsula
Stretching half-way across the Sound of Mull,
Passionate of storms, although she loveth too
The murmuring summer waves so peaceable,
When the sun shows the sea one sheet of gold
Almost too radiant to be looked upon,
Or, set in silver of the moonlight, rise
Her pillared headlands and her sylvan isles.

The glens are glad, the mountains sing for joy,
And Morven once more feels herself alive,
While o'er her cliffs, startling the ear of night,
Keep thundering her broad-sheeted cataracts
Tumultuous welcome to her chief's return.

But dim o'er that old castle look the stars;
And with disastrous halo dim the moon,
That rose last night so splendid, sails away
In among clouds, that ominously hang
Above those towers alone; a single speck
Unseen elsewhere in all the sparkling skies.
Prodigious shadows on the tomb-like walls
Are following one another sullenly;
And seem not night-glooms, at such seasons, ghosts?
Lo! stranger from the farthest Hebrides,
Hitherwards stilly on the stilliest nights
Wafted on wings whose wavings have no sound
More than have clouds, across the sable pines
Floats the great snowy owl! and list! a voice!
A human voice—a miserable cry!
Comes it from that dim figure on the cliffs
Walking as one might walk who roams in sleep?
His inarticulate wailings wail themselves
Into wild words by echo made more wild;
And as he disappears his moanings go
Round with him, all the haunted castle round,
"Woe! woe! to all the house of Unimore!"

VISION SIXTH.

THE SEER.

Summer at once has come on Unimore;
Her chief is now her sun; the woods have burst
Into their full effulgence; all the glens
With green light overflow; the heather-bloom,
Anticipating autumn, purples faint
The moors and mountains; in the forest-chase,
Never in such deep herbage dipped their hoofs
The red-deer, nor the goats along the cliffs
On such profusion of wild-flowerage browsed;
Fed by night-rain not heavier than the dew,
Enlivening all the rivered solitudes,
Steep waterfalls, for ever musical,
Keep dinning on; the hunter on the hill,
In some short pause of pastime underneath
The cliff, cheered as he listens unawares

Far off the hollow noise ; the eagle's self,
Along with his wild bark had ne'er been seen
Floating aloft so frequent, in wide rings
Seeking the sun as he would circle it ;
For never in the memory of man
Had reigned so many blue days without break,
O'er the still vastness of the unclouded sky.

Expands the panorama as we gaze,
Nor knows the roving vision where to fix ;
Here won by beauty, by magnificence
There suddenly assailed ; contented now
To linger in affection 'mid the calm
Of loveliness endearing, close at hand ;
Now borne away in passion to the stir
Of grandeur restless on the shadowy heights.
From that far flight it all at once returns ;
For lo ! in lucid range majestical,
Deep down the disappearing loch, how still,
And yet how animated, all the cliffs
With their inverted imagery ! Swans,
'Mid mingling air and water, light and shade,
In rest float imperceptibly along ;
But soon their snow-white pomp evanishes ;
For central in that wondrous world, with all
Its towers, and roofs, and rocks, and woods, and groves,
Serenely conscious of its lord's return
Hangs the old castle proud as in its prime,
With all its banners drooping motionless ;
But soon as the great Cavern of the Gloom
Doth blow its trumpet at meridian,
The loch will lose them, and the castle stream
Unfolded wide their bright emblazonry,
While, at a signal given by waving plumes,
Shall shout the exulting clan their chieftain's name,
And all the echoes answer, " Unimore !"

His presence for a month hath Morven felt,
And all that month hath been one festival.
By day among her mountains—rest is none,
And short by night in shieling and in hut
The clansmen's haunted sleep.

Their souls are stirred
As glooms by sunbeams, and as calms by blasts ;

And he their chieftain is both sun and cloud,
Sole source is he of splendours and of storms,
O'er glen and forest, mountain, sea and loch.
The ancient pastimes of the hills revive.
And sometimes summoning all at once his clan
To gather round him on that esplanade
In front of his old castle, the claymore
That shone through battle, in the sweeping sway
Of his heroic sires, the chieftain draws,
And shows in clashing combat how the Gael
Went slaughtering onwards through the fights of old,
Before the sons of Morven. Not an arm
Like his among them all, when far outstretched
Starts sudden into sinewy knots its strength
Gigantic; to their chieftain's not a breast
Fit to oppose, though breasts are there like boles
Of gnarled oaks that in the tempests grow.
To-day their souls are up.

"Across the seas
The wars are raging; let our plumes again
Be seen in line of battle; let our pipes
Again be heard amid the cannon din;
And our Lochaber-axes hew their way
Again as they were wont, when at the head
Of his own clan was seen The Unimore.
Green grows the grass again on Fontenoye;
Culloden's self is green; but be the field
Unfoughten yet afar, all bloody red—
And red for ever; for from Morven's glens
Revenge comes flying, and long heaps of dead
Piled up shall expiate every clansman's sin,
Who died not on the day his chieftain died."

Frowned then, as if a black cloud shadowed it,
That broad high forehead, and the chieftain stood
With sun-bronzed visage all inflamed with pride,
And shame! For with his sudden hand he veiled
His eyes no more like eagle's, and the earth
Sucked in the glaring of their ghastly light.
He stood awhile, as still as pillar-stone
Stands by itself on some wide moor, alone—
Amid the mists and storms. Then waved his arm—
"Off to the mountains—all my merry-men!
The red-deer-King is belling on the cliff,

Nor in their eyrie are the eaglets mute!
The feet that tread the precipice's edge
And rocks that bridge the chasms, they all ere long
In measured march along the battle-plain
Will move wet-shod in blood; but let the horn
Now peaceful echo startle in her cave,
Upon no distant day the points of war
To wind heroically up the sky,
When we with loud shouts on the space between
The armies both drawn up in line of battle,
In Morven-Tartan bright our Rifle Band,
An army of itself, and clothed in fire,
Shout fierce assurance of a victory."

"Off to the mountains!" The wide desert rings
With trump, and horn, and pipe, and shoutings shrill
As is the goshawk's cry! No figure there,
Though Morven mid her stately sons can show
Giants, no figure there like Unimore's.
Far nod his plumes upon the mountain-side
Unovertaken; Lewis Swiftfoot toils,
Plunging waist-deep in heather, or along
The smooth white bough-like bareness of the bent
With stag-like boundings measuring the moor,
After his chief in vain. The deer-hounds lolling
Their red tongues-gallop graceful by his side
As he descends one mountain, reascending
Across the glen another range of cliffs.
Now round the bases of a hundred hills
Expands the circling Tinchel, till, behold!
A waving wood of antlers, on the cliff
Above them towering up precipitous,
The hungry raven with a sullen croak
Of savage joy, as he doth eye the quarry,
Forestalling his large banquet. From the herd
Not singled out, but singling out himself,
As if he scorned the danger others dread,
The deer-king bounding on from crag to crag,
Seen oftener in the air than on the earth,
Faces the Tinchel, and high over-head
Of all the hunters, stooped their plumage then,
Hoofs, bulk, and antlers furiously self-flung
As if discharged from the steep precipice,
Goes glenwards belling fierce, while Unimore,
Sparing another hour that noble life,

Motions all rifles down, and cheering on
The brindled deer-hounds ravenous now as wolves,
But silent in their savage speed, and mute
When mouthing deep the flanks that heave with death,
Away into the blue and distant day,
Floating o'er lone Lurgroy! Nor may the Chase,
For lo! he carries yet his antlers high,
Founder, till Morven's mountains all o'er-run,
He swim Loch-Sunart's straits, and through the Pass
Of Xalibreccan inaccessible
To all but hoofs like his, the rock-bound shores
Reach of Kinrira, and there unpursued
Plunge panting in the breakers of the sea.

The hunt is o'er; for Fingal on the crags
Of Achnagavil, near the wild Loch-Uist,
Hath pulled the deer-king down; and Unimore,
The passion of the chase extinguished quite,
Turns from the dying quarry and the hounds
His eyes upon the savage solitude.
Here, in this very place, the ghost-like Seer
Had stood before him many years ago,
And muttered the strange prophecy that worked,
Meeting with prepared passion in his heart,
Ere long its own fulfilment; driving him
Aloof from all hereditary haunts,
And family-loves and old remembrances,
Into the crimes and perils of the deep.
He looks up to the cave in which the Seer
Once led his haunted life; and from its mouth
Out crawling slow, the same wild being lifts
Its shapelessness among the shapeless stones,
Bent double by the dismal dreams of age,
With rusty elf-locks horridly o'ergrown.
The hideous figure by some secret path
Hath come down from the cave, and wailingly
Clasping his withered hands, and flinging back
The matted hair from off his bloodshot eyes,
Falls down and grovels at the chieftain's feet.
"In evil hour, and on a woeful wind,
Came the Sea-Eagle back to Unimore.
Woe to the lovely Fawns that sport and play
By their fair selves among the forest bowers!
The cruel Osprey with his talons tears

Their beauty, and they perish side by side.
Woe to his Eyrie!—to all Morven woe!"

His princely head the high-born chieftain stoops
Down from its plumèd pride, and supplicates
The revelations of a madman's dream.
His young imagination had grown up
In superstitious awe of that wild Seer;
And many a dim prediction, verified
By fatal happenings far beyond the rim
Of an ungifted ken, had then inspired
And sunk into the soul of Unimore,
In boyhood an unconscious fatalist,
A creed as strong as e'er religious faith
Died for in holiest martyrdom, endured
In fire, for sake of God's own oracles.
Whole days among the utter dreariness
Of trackless moors, where not one single rill
Murmurs, but sometimes scowls a sable loch
O'erspread with sullen and unhallowed thoughts,
Sun-hating and sun-hated,—so it seems
To life-sick wanderer o'er the wilderness,—
Walked that woe-withered eld and that bright gleam
Of beauteous boyhood;—strange companionship!
By shrouded corpses haunted, and by long
Black trains of visionary funerals,
The seër, and the heir of all the hills,
As yet enveloped in the unfaded light
Of being's glorious prime. But potent spirits
Are fear and wonder o'er the dreams of youth;
Nor may the chains they forge, in after life
Be loosened, for the links are riveted
Into the very soul, and only snapped
At last asunder by bond-breaking death.
"I saw no vision of a sinking ship,
No wreck on shore, no corpse upon the sea,
No skeleton imprisoned in a cell
With thirst and hunger. Others wept thee dead,
I wept thee living as I now do weep.
One stormy day I saw Ben-Mean-Moor
Changed to a sea of blood, and sailing there
With his black flag the pirate. On the deck
There walked the chief of Morven! Unimore
Among his outlaws all, a dreadful crew;
And ever round about her and above,

Wherever tempest-driven she roared along,
Flitted a flock of ghosts—the crews of ships
By thee and thy fierce boarders in their wrath
All murdered."

A deep hollow voice repeats,
"All murdered!" Suddenly wrung out of guilt
Confession; but no sound of penitence
Was with the words, nor of remorse. The chief
Again is standing stately o'er the seer
With aspect of defiance,—"Doom is doom,
Fate, fate; and what the blind religionists
Call heaven or hell is but the mystery
Of each man's life, determined by the stars,
Here or hereafter; if hereafter be,
As sometimes dreams the shadow of a shade!
But, Seer of misery and of madness, speak!"

"Death whitens at the bottom of a pool
That is itself pitch-black. The drowned are drawn
Out of the cruel depth, both dressed like brides!
Beneath the sunshine in each other's arms
I see them lying—lovely in their lives,
Nor in their deaths divided.—Fly! oh! fly!
For ever far from Morven, Unimore!
And thou may'st die forgiven! Sometimes the shades
Deceive the Seer, and heaven's own gracious light
Doth melt away the curse. O'er far Tiree
I see thy ship at anchor, soon to sail,
Bearing thee off to sin in foreign lands."

A crowd of visions storm the chieftain's soul,
Visions of misery all, and guilt and death!
Remorse there sends her frightments, Conscience hers,
And Fear, that wild magician, worst of all;
For Sin may scorn the spectres of the dead,
But quails in solitude before the wraiths
Of the doomed living, gliding by in shrouds,
Or only something white that in the gloom
Glimmers, a coming and a going dim,
Semblance of one who soon shall be a ghost.

The Seer is in his cave; the chieftain stands
Alone, and utters words scarce consciously,

As if addressing his own shadow thrown,
For evening is descending, long and still,
Over the rocky hush. "Communion strange
Through agency more spiritual than air,
Yet spirit may be air, and air be spirit,
Has holden been, up in his wolfish den,
Between that wretch in his insanity,
And all the sinnings and calamities
Doomed to befall me in this troubled life.
That is a mystery—but all is mystery;
Though Superstition less mysterious far
Than what men in their blindness choose to call
Religion, now benighting half the earth.
Yet sometimes even I do feel remorse,
And often pity! But remorse is vain,
For mortal man may not rebuke his fate.
'Tis Fate that wicked is, if wickedness
It be, that raging in our passions, spreads
Death with delight, and shrouds in misery
All perishable joys. Old men may nurse
Remorse, for they are wise, and sin no more;
Nay, beautiful in them is penitence!
But every passion in its empery
Doth laugh remorse to scorn, and scowls contempt
On penitence. And as for pity, fair,
Though fancy-painted to our eyes she be,
What is it but a transient gush of tears?
And what is sorrow, that we pity it?
A sigh—a sob—a groan—it is no more.
Hours, days, months, years of suffering, what are they
When the grave yawneth for the skeleton?
All one then saint and sinner—a cold corpse!
Despair and hope, and bliss and agony,
What are they when that feeble spark goes out,
But past convulsions of some living thing,
Now senseless, soulless, in eternal dust?"

Night comes with all her stars—and with her moon
Midnight—and dawn upon the planet smiles
And pales her shining—and refulgent morn
Doth drown the dawn, and ushers in the day
Consummate. All the while hath Unimore
Been sitting in the solitude—his life
Rolling before him like the stormy seas!
But now elated by the sun, he moves

Castle-wards, nor for that dismal prophecy
Careth he more than a distempered dream.

VISION SEVENTH.

THE DEMON.

The Lady of the Castle lives in heaven;
Ten years of misery bought one month of bliss,
Cheap purchase of the priceless calm divine
Deeper and deeper settling on her soul,
Farther and farther o'er its regions all
Expanding, till, like summer-sea, it lies,
Embayed in the Pacific, some still bay
Unvisited by any wandering ship,
And known in nature only to the stars
And moon, that love it as their native sky!

The past is all obliterate; gone to dust
All tears, all sighs unto the wind; belong
To hope and fear the future, and they two
Have left alone in her beatitude
Love, all-in-all sufficient for the Now,
The perfect present that may never die,
Seeming immortal in its depth of rest.

In that maternal heart is happiness,
Oh! far beyond all happiness that e'er
Did dwell in Eden's garden, Paradise!
Imagination, dreaming of the life
Before sin brought the Fall, still misses there
The joy of grief, nor understands delight
Without the mournful sanctity of tears.
But in this world of ours, this world of woe,
Lo! Bliss is born within a breaking heart,
And therefore it is bliss; and hymns are heard,
Thanksgiving hymns ascending up to heaven,
While bright congratulation from the stars
Shines down on eyes still wet with gratitude.
Break the iron doors, and set the prisoner free,
Exchanged earth's dark, damp, breathless, narrow cell

For the bright, dewy, breezy, boundless cope
Resplendent for the new inhabitant
Of God's own heaven! Unchain the galley slave,
Sink his worn oar for ever in the sea,
And let him tread again the war-ship's deck,
Below the flag that rules the world of waves,
Among the equal sons of liberty!
Let healing, on a sudden, smooth the bed
Of agonised disease, and carry it
Out to the shadowy sunshine of the morn,
And bid the matron lift her eyes, and see
Kneeling around her all who ought to kneel,
While she arises, and among the flowers
Walks forth restored, nor fears the harmless dews,
But sheds among them some few pious tears.
Deep joys are those and high, and woe-born all;
But far transcends them all the joy that lifts
At once a mother's whole soul from despair,
And sets it on a radiant eminence
Within a heaven beyond the heaven of hope,
With her arms twined for ever round the neck
Of him she had thought dead—her only son!

The Lady of the Castle hath no power
To walk with her own princely Unimore
Along the greensward braes, the purple sides
Of the high-heather mountains; through the woods
Where beauteous birch-trees to the stately oaks
Whisper a gentler music; down the glens
Where rivers roll o'er frequent cataracts;
Or into dells, each with its own small rill
Pellucid, and its humble scenery
Of broomy knolls with delicate trees bedropt,
Within itself a world in miniature,
Where oft on moonlight nights the Fairies dance,
And little laughter thrills the solitude.
No power hath she, to shieling and to hut
With life besprinkling the wide wilderness,
With him to walk, and, as those lofty plumes
Below the clansman's lowly lintel stoop,
To hear and see the pride that brightens then
The dim abode of high-souled poverty,
Pride to love kindred, love to gratitude,
And gratitude to patriotism, name
That breathes the old religion of the Hills.

No such delight is hers ; for all her limbs,
Soon as subsided the miraculous power
Given by her passion in the Oratory,
Relapsed into their palsied helplessness ;
And ever since she hath exchanged her bed
But for that bier, on which, when air is calm
And sunshine bright, and glimmering shadows cool,
She lies, and by those clansmen carried
To consecrated places,—many a one,
Where she and her son's sire did sit of old
Among the castle-woods,—there meditates
On the sweet mystery of her perfect bliss,
Nor cares although no Unimore be there,
Pursuing on the mountains his own joy ;
For she can make his presence visible
By act creative of her will, as bright
The phantom's eyes, as if his very self
Were smiling on her there, the phantom's voice,
For air hath then a tongue, as melting sweet
As if his self were speaking, and the kiss
That she receiveth from imagined lips
As tender, as when stooping o'er her bier,
Her long-lost, late-returned doth breathe his breath,
His own dear breath, to her still like a child's,
Into the yearnings of his mother's soul ;
One thought enough for her—He is *alive !*

O sacred ignorance ! O delusion blest !
To her that Demon doth an Angel seem ;
To her guilt wears the brow of innocence ;
To her sin looks like holiness ; to her
Crime holdeth up the same unspotted hands
Before the Altar of the Oratory,
As when her blameless boy, long long ago,
Knelt down in prayer beside his father's knees.
Oh ! if the radiant veil by Mercy drawn
Before the eyes of Love, radiant but deep,
With most mysterious emblems wrought therein,
Whose beauty intercepts the ghastly sights
To and fro passing 'tween them and the sky,
Were rent away, how suddenly those eyes
Would then be blasted, and the soul that gazed
Out from their tears upon some object held
Holiest of all most holy, by a blow
Be broken all at once, a fiendish blow

Struck by a hand unhallowing in the light,
The dismal light of truth that shows the earth
Fit habitation only for despair!

A blessing, therefore, call hypocrisy!
Sacred be falsehood! and deceit a name
To desecrate blasphēmous! Sin this sphere
Would people else with a distracted crowd
Of ghosts, in their discovered wickedness
Daring no more to look upon the sun;
Nor, midst the upbraidings of each other's eyes,
To hope for pardon from Almighty Heaven!

And yet the Demon hath a human heart,
Nor is it dead to filial piety;
For pious even is natural tenderness,
Awaking unawares, and unawares
Partaking of mysterious feeling born
Of origin celestial—mixed with clay.
What else hath brought the Pirate from the sea?
What else hath shown once more with all its plumes
On his own mountains shining like a star,
The chief of Morven's death-denouncèd head?
When sunk the bright Saldanha, where wert thou?
Thy country's voice ere long will call on thee
To tell in what long darkness Unimore
Hath hid his name and being, whither sailed
When she was wrecked, as wave-born rumours yet
Dark-floating tell, one of the Frigate's boats
Deep-laden with a crew of mutineers.
Build, captain, crew, all but her name unknown,
Fleeter than winds and waves o'er many a sea,
For many a year pursued in vain, hath flown
The Black Sea-Eagle. Black at times she flew,
As was the tempest she delighted in;
But bright at times, with her new bravery on,
And like some floating palace built for kings,
Burnished her hull and deck, and up aloft
Burning with meteors uneclipsed by clouds
Rolled idly towards her unapproachèd path
By single ship or squadron falling fast
To leeward, as the Pirate, every gun
Silent, went windward fearless through the foam,
Glorious in flight before all enemies.

"Woe to the lovely Fawns that sport and play
By their fair selves among the forest-bowers!
The cruel Osprey with his talons tears
Their beauty, and they perish side by side!"
So prophesied the cliff-cave Seër wild;
But evil thing or thought may not approach
By day their happy waking, nor by night
Their holy sleep; for Powers invisible
Keep watch and ward o'er Innocence; she lies
Safe in the moonlight, in the sunshine safe
She walks, although upon the precipice
Her couch be spread, although along its edge
Should glide her blind feet by the dread abyss.
Then for the Orphan-sisters have no fears;
As fair as lilies and as glad as larks
They grow and sing, while banks and braes are bright
With their pale beauty, with their voices sweet,
Air, sky, and clouds for ever musical.

With mournful steps and melancholy eyes
No more they move around the bed or bier
Of their blest mother; and if tears at times
Come o'er their cheeks, they are but like the dew
On flowers, that only falls on quiet nights,
And melts on sunny morns. Their faces now
In joy's full daylight even more beautiful
Than when grief, like a gentle gloaming, dimmed
Their pensive loveliness; for Nature wills
That cloudless be the clime, the ether pure
Within the eyes of young virginity,
Gladdening whate'er they look on, in return
Gladdened, till life is all one heavenly smile,
And things insensate fair as those with life.
Around that bed and bier they minister
With piety that finds its own reward
In its own perfect happiness; their hymns,
Wont to ascend on high with melodies
Almost too sad, with harmonies themselves
Felt, in their pity, almost too profound,
Are warbled now, without offence to Heaven,
With a meek cheerfulness; and as they sing,
The Orphans, listening to their own sweet strains,
Humbly believe that all the prayers they breathe
Do find acceptance,—why their mother's face,
So very pale, else seem so very blest!

But ever when unto that bier or bed
Her son approaches, then do glide away
The thoughtful Orphans, often murmured back;
And at a little distance they sit down,
Whether it be within some forest glade
Taking their seat below another tree,
Or in deep window breathing mute apart
Within that holy room where they had watched
Alternately, by day and night, for years
When he was far away, whose presence now
Makes theirs—so think they—but of little worth.
Oh! meek mistake of sweet humility!
For many cells are in that mother's heart,
And open to her Orphans are they all;
All save the very inmost, dedicate
To the sole image of her only son,
When nature, by religion overcome,
Feels, that in reverence of herself, the bliss
Must be all-secret on the Sabbath-hour
That sees once more within a mother's arms,
With supplicating prayers encircling him,
A long-lost son beneath the eye of God.

But when the pious mother all alone
Wished sometimes to be left, that she might drink
The solitary cup of peace divine,
Then with the sinless orphans Unimore
Walked, as a gentle brother loves to walk
With his sweet sisters in their blossoming
Flowers lovelier growing every sunny day,
Through the wide-warbling woods, the glens serene
Lengthening away in endless solitude,
Each beauteous bending but a novel glimpse
Of the same Paradise; one treeless all,
And with smooth herbage green as emerald,
As if the river once had been a loch,
In olden time o'erflowing all the braes;
Another broken here and there with groves
Crowning the knolls, the rocky side-skreens strewn
With straggling copse up to the falcon's nest;
Or suddenly, all sullen and austere
Into some place composed of precipice
Washed bare as sea-cliffs by tempestuous floods,
Where goat doth never hang, nor red-deer couch,
Nor raven croak; herb, blade, bud, leaf, and flower,

All withered from the utter barrenness.
Such the grim desolation where Ben-Hun
And Craig-na-torr, by earthquake shatterings
Disjoined with horrid chasms prerupt, enclose
What Superstition calls The Glen of Ghosts.

There stunned by such soul-shaking solitudes,
By such heart-soothing solitudes subdued,
Sitting on each side of their Unimore,
Their brave and beauteous brother, to wild tales
Of battle and of shipwreck, and of chains
For hopeless years worn in captivity,
The Orphans listened, and when listening wept,
And weeping felt that never until then
Had they enjoyed the perfect bliss of tears.

There sometimes at his bidding they would sing
Old Gaelic tunes to Gaelic words as old,—
For with the heather-bloom and heather-balm
It seemed as if these children had imbibed
Music and verse, and scarce their murmuring lips
Betrayed the secret of their Lowland birth ;—
As Unimore, with smiles, would sometimes say—
"So perfectly within that chapel, ye,
From holy ministrations, in the huts
From humble talk, and in our mother's room
From converse with high thoughts familiar
Between yourselves, to charm the ear of her
Whose once-sweet tongue had lost the power of speech ;
So perfectly from such dear lessons, ye,
Through a fine ear a fine soul listening,
Have caught our mountain-accents, and have learnt
Our many-coloured language, sometimes bright
With rainbow hues, and sometimes dim with shades
Flung from the forests, and sometimes with gloom
Black, such as falls down from a thunder-cloud
On the still dreariness of savage moors ;
All imaged in that wondrous poetry
Floating in fragments o'er the wilderness,
Songs Ossianic never sung before
So sweetly as now by my sweet sisters' lips
In sound accordant, as in sympathy
Their souls, by Heaven in loveliness enshrined !
O sinless Orphans ! never in your prayers,
When seas between you and your brother roll

Again their howling multitude of waves,
From Morven far, forget your Unimore!"

Words full of peril to these simple ones!
But heard withouten fear; yet all the while
That they were singing—all the while that he
Was speaking to them with a voice that rung
As the harp's silver chords profound and clear,
And passion-charged with tones electrical—
Passion that seemed fraternal tenderness
For them who on their birthday had been left
Orphans, as well he knew; Oh! all that while
Had they been looking, in their innocence,
Upon a form majestically fair
In its ancestral pride; and in their hearts
Elate by that heroic poetry,
They thought, nor knew that in the thought was lodged
The fatal germ of a wild growth of woe,
That chief so bright as he before their eyes,
Ne'er fought of old in war of chariots
By Ossian sung on Morven's Hills of Storm!

And often in the breezy sunshine, when
The Loch was blue as heaven, and not a cloud
Could find one spot of calm to show itself
In soft reflection in the shadiest bay,—
Rejoicing to forsake her anchorage
Within that wooded amphitheatre,
Filled full of life and beauty, and as white
As snow-wreath yet unmelted in the cove
High on the mountain, all her flags on fire
Up in the air, and in the waves below
Her burnished gunwale flushing, and her hull
Fair as the foam that murmured round her prow,
The winds obedient to her, so it seemed,
And not she to the winds, circling the Loch,
Or shooting arrow-like from end to end,
Or then, capricious, intersecting it
With many a figure most fantastical,—
Like wild-swan swimming in his stately play
All for his mate's delight, among the reeds
Brooding in secret, or in sheltered nook
Among the water-lilies floating still
With her two cygnets,—the long summer-day
Too short for all her aimless voyaging,

For other aim with her but freedom's joy
Was none, her bright apparel as she flew
Brightening as if she gathered to herself
The choicest light, and would not let it go,
The NAIAD, making that great liquid glen
All her own empire, steered by Unimore,
And by his side the Orphans lost in dreams
Bewildering all their being with delights
Imagination breathes o'er virgin love,
Returned not to her haven till the stars
Showed eve had come, or till the moon arose,
And closed the long day with a day-like night.

VISION EIGHTH.

THE CONFESSION.

The Book of Nature and the Book of God
Interpreted by dreadless Piety,—
Pursuing her vocation, unappalled
By mystery of evil, 'mid the stars
Whose places are appointed in the sky,
Or 'mid the goings-on of human hearts,
A planetary system hard to scan,
But in its strange irregularities
Obeying steadfast laws,—on every page
In lines of light a calm assurance gives
To spiritual faith of one immortal truth,
"Beloved by Heaven are all the innocent!"
We see them disappear in sudden death,
And leaving tender spots of sunniness
Darker than if that radiance ne'er had shone.
The beauty of their faces is eclipsed
For ever; and for ever their sweet names
Forgotten, or when read upon their tombs,
We know not what surpassing grace endowed
The dust that once was life. Sometimes they wane
Slowly and sadly into dim decay,
Dying by imperceptible degrees
Hourly before our eyes that still must shed
Their foolish tears for them who for themselves
Weep not, but gaze with orbs of joyful light

Upon the coming dawn. The Innocents
Are thus for ever melting from the earth,
Like dewdrops all at once, or like dewdrops
Slowly exhaled. But never in our grief
Lose we our righteous confidence in Heaven.
Long as they live, our spirits cling and cleave
To theirs, unwilling that they should depart
From our home to their own—our chilly clime
To that pure ether where the lily white
Shall never droop nor wither any more,
Perennial by the founts of Paradise.
But when we see the bosom has no breath,
And that indeed the lovely dust is dead,
With faith how surely resignation comes,
And smiles away all mortal sorrowing!
Annihilated is all distance then
Between the blackness of the coffin-lid
And Mercy's Throne of shining chrysolite;
While in the hush, at first so terrible,
As if the spirit sang to comfort them,
Their own child's blissful voice both parents hear
Among the hallelujahs. Death is not,
And nothing is but everlasting life.
"Beloved of Heaven are all the innocent!"

Oh! by this creed supported, look ye now
Upon these Orphan sisters! Mortal change
Their beauty undergoes;—each countenance
Hath lost its light celestial, and is dim
With troubled happiness that looks like grief,
A grief like woe, a woe, alas! like guilt!—
And have the Orphans come at last to know
That misery treads on fallen innocence,
And that the wages here of sin are death?
Fear not: they both are wretched—nevermore
Shall gladness dance within their eyes—their smiles
Shall never more revive the drooping flowers;
And never more shall any looks of theirs,
When gazing up they thither send their souls,
Lend their own calmness to the calm of heaven!
Fear not: they both are wretched—both are blest—
Nor blameless are they in their wretchedness,
Nor in their bliss—but taint of sin is none
Upon their bosoms, more than on the leaves
Of rose or lily withering when half-blown,

By Nature not permitted to enjoy
The loveliness of its own perfect prime.

This is their birthday. Seventeen years of peace
Have floated o'er their being—a long time
Felt they, the Orphans, to look back upon,
As their souls, travelling always in the light
Through crowds of happy thoughts and things, retraced
Life in among the fading memories
Of earliest childhood, meeting all at once
The blank of infancy's evanished dream.
And yet how short a time for all that growth
Of heart, and mind, and soul, and spirit! All
The flowers and fruitage on the wondrous Tree
Of Being from a germ immortal sprung.
Profound the wisdom is of Innocence.
She taught the Orphans all their knowledge, high
As are the stars, yet humble as the flowers;
And bathed it all in feeling, as the light
Of stars, when at their brightest, radiant,
And soft as is the bloom of flowers, when they
Look fearless back upon their earliest spring.
She taught them pity and the lore of grief,
Whose language is the inarticulate breath
Of sacred sighs, and written on the air
In purest tears, mysterious characters
Seen in the sun when Nature's self is blest.
She gave unto the Orphans' quiet eyes
The sense of beauty that makes all the earth
Without an effort, and unconsciously,
Fair as the sinless soul that looks on it.
She filled their spirits with o'erflowing love,
Till on the flower the peaceful butterfly
Was thought a holy thing, because its life
Appeared so happy, and the flower itself
Fairer, for that it seemed to feel the joy
Asleep upon its balm. With loftier love
She did their hearts inspire, the love of all
Which in itself is loveliest, and they knew
It must be their own filial piety,
When at their mother's side, at morn and eve,
Knelt all their knees together down at once
Before the Throne of God. And Innocence
It was, none other, who the holy light
Of conscience gently brought upon their eyes,

And showed the paths of duty in that light
To be mistaken never, strewn with flowers
That lay as soft as snow beneath their feet.
But ever when into that Oratory
They walked, and by their mother's bier knelt down
Beside the Altar, then did Innocence
Surrender up her trust, and from the skies
Into that Sabbath-calm Religion came,
Descending duly as the Orphans hymned
Their Miserere; hers the voice that said,
While their lips lingered on the crucifix,
"For His sake, Children, are your sins forgiven!"

Such was their life—but now that life is gone.
Upon their very birthday Unimore
Has sailed away to join his ship that lies
Beyond the farthest of the Hebride Isles,
With promise to his mother and to them
Ere winter is heard howling to return,
And leave the glens of Morven ne'er again.
They had not heart together to behold,
Carrying the sunshine with her down the Loch,
The NAIAD, that appeared to dance away
Heedless of all the hills, and rocks, and woods,
As she were longing for some far-off home,—
All at an end their blissful voyagings
In that bright bark, and never more they felt
To be renewed in this forsaken life,—
Dancing away, impatient as the Mew
That, wearied of the inland stillness, wheels
Her joyful flight back to her native sea.
Apart the Orphans on the Naiad gazed,
And long kept gazing on the vacant waves
Long after by eclipsing promontory
Had been cut off her white wings from the day;
One sitting on a greensward-brae far up
Among the rocks, one on the Western Tower;
Each knowing in her utter misery
What pangs are rending then her sister's heart;
But both—O rueful selfishness of woe!
Insensible to pity, and absorpt
In suffering kindred, so they feel, to guilt.

At last the lovely greensward-brae has grown
Unto the wretched creature weeping there

No more supportable ; and from the tower
Blindly comes down her sister by dark stairs ;
Both walking in one woe towards the place
Where first before their eyes stood Unimore,
And seized upon their hearts, that ne'er again
Did beat as quietly as they used to beat
When bliss sufficient for the day it was
To see the glad light in each other's eyes,
To blend their voices in the same sad song,
And at some tale of sorrow to inquire,
One of the other, how it chanced that smiles
Were sweetest then when most bedimmed with tears.
Before the Altar of the Oratory
They meet—and start each other's face to see
So woe-begone—for each is like a ghost,
And both do look as longing for the grave.

They sit down speechless on the Altar steps ;
And now revives the sacred sympathy
That used to link their happy souls in one,
As if their fair breasts mutually exchanged
Lives, nor the transfer knew in the divine
Delight of equal and of perfect love.
Around each other's necks they lay their arms,
And for forgiveness sob out syllablings
Of broken supplications and stopt prayers,
Dismal implorings indistinct and dim
Addressed now to each other, now to God ;
And as the name sends shivering through their frames,
Mysteriously pervaded from their birth
With all the self-same sensibilities,
One shudder, by the lips of both at once
Convulsively is uttered—"Unimore!"

The bright-haired Orphan first hath found her voice
Fit for confession, and her sister folding
More closely to her breast that soul and soul
May touch, again she prays forgiveness,
And wanders through the story of her love,
Her love for him who has forsaken her,
And left her bosom for the stormy seas.
"Oh! Sister! well I knew that for his sake
Not loth wouldst thou be any hour to die ;
For in my heart the love that burned alway
Sleeping or waking, told me that in thine

The same fire was consuming all thy peace;
And much I wept for thee, when Unimore
Beseeched me to become his wedded wife;
Yea! happiest of the happy had I been
In these my days of blameless innocence,
Had I upon my deathbed been but told
That Heaven had a long life of love in store
For thee and him, nor would the funeral
Of such a wretch, alas! as I am now,
Have needed, half-forgotten in your bliss,
To dim the sunshine on your marriage morn.
Oh! sister! pardon while thou pitiest me;
If pardon anywhere below the skies
Can be extended to my cruel sin!
That very day on which I saw thee lie
Down in thy hopeless love for Unimore,
And heard thee muttering in distressful sleep,
Prayers for an early death—that very sun
Beheld me in my sorrow and my shame,
Sailing with him away to Oronsay;
And in the Chapel on that fatal isle
We stood beside the Altar, and its priest
Before our Maker and our Saviour made
Our beings one; but sin unhallowed it,
And filled the sacred service full of tears,
Tears of remorse, and tears of penitence;
For greater wickedness on earth than mine
There might not be, who overcome by prayers
From him who had no pity, did consent
To break,—I see it breaking, so is mine,—
My sister's heart, in which there was no guile,
Nothing but love for me and Unimore!"

She speaks unto the dead—her sister's eyes
Are fixed and glazed, her face is as the clay
Clammy and cold, and rigid is her frame,
As if laid out for burial in its shroud.
"O Unimore! thou broken hast my heart,
And I have broken hers! soon has our sin
Destroyed us all. Thy ship will sink at sea,
And thou wilt perish, for in Providence
No trust canst thou have, nor, I fear, belief!
This dreadful sight hath opened thy bride's eyes,
Thy wife's, thy widow's: but for holy names
Like these, thou carest not in thy cruelty,

Nor wouldst thou shed one tear to see us both
Lying alone here miserably dead!"

Enters the old priest, with his locks of snow
And bowed down figure reverential,
And takes his stand beside the Altar-steps,
With withered hands, in attitude of prayer
Clasped o'er the Orphans.

"Father! I have killed
My Sister! she hath died for Unimore's
And for my sin. Oh! water from the font
With holy sprinklings may restore her life
A little while, and in forgiveness
Our souls depart to judgment!"

"Daughter! thou
Art guiltless, and thy Sister knows no guilt,
Except the stain of fallen humanity!
But guilt lies heavy on this hoary head;
For I it was who, in my old age, won
From the plain path of duty, did declare
Thy Sister wedded unto Unimore
Before this very altar, though I knew
He was a man of guilt and many crimes
Uncleansed, uncleansable; for penitence
Sails not with him upon the seas, remorse
Shall never walk among the hideous crew
That on their Pirate-leader yell for blood.
I loved his noble sire—too well I love
Him in his sin—and have brought misery
On all I most do love and reverence
On earth, his sainted mother, and his wife
Now lying at thy feet. Forgiveness
Is wanted most by the old foolish man
Who thus hath steeped his hoary locks in shame,
And to the Demon given thy sister's soul.
Oh! little need has now thy innocence
For intercession of the holy Saints.
But I will sprinkle ashes on my head!
Pray for me, daughter—for I need thy prayers!"

Kneels the old priest upon the Altar-steps,
And bending low, his long locks overflow
The Orphans' heads both lying tranquilly,

Nor any motion have their bosoms now ;
Hard-beating there is none—a single sigh
Was all he heard, when sinking gently down,
Beside that other body, she to whom
He had been speaking in her paleness lay
Corpse-like to his dim eyes most pitiful :
And is it thus that they do celebrate
Their birthday—shall it be their day of death !

VISION NINTH.

EXPIATION.

Oh ! if our eyes could look into the hearts
Of human dwellings standing quietly
Beneath the sunrise in sweet rural spots,
Far from all stir, and haply green and bright
With fragrant growth of dewy leaves and flowers,
Where bees renew their murmuring morn, and birds
Begin again to trill their orisons,
Nature and Life exchanging their repose
For music and for motion, happier both
And in their happiness more beautiful
Than sleep with all its dreams,—Oh ! if our eyes
Could penetrate these consecrated walls
Whose stillness seems to hide an inward bliss
Diviner than the dawn's, what woeful sights
Might they behold ! Hands clasped in hopeless prayers
By dying beds, or pale cheeks drenched in tears
Beside cheeks paler far, in death as white
As the shroud-sheets on which the corpses lie ;
Or tossings of worse misery far, where Guilt
Implores in vain the peace of Penitence,
Or sinful Passion, struggling with Remorse,
Becomes more sinful, in its mad desire
To reconcile with God's forbidding laws
A life of cherished vice, or daringly
Doubts or denies eternal Providence !

Where, then, would be the beauty—where the bliss
Of dawn that comes to purify the earth
And all that breathes upon it, at the hour
Chosen for her own delight by Innocence !

There would they still be, gracious and benign
And undisturbèd all by grief or guilt
Powerful to curl the heart's-blood into ice
That blows may break not, but one drop of dew,
Powerless to stir upon the primrose leaf.
The fairest things in nature sympathise
In our imaginations with our life,
Only as long as we are virtuous;
Nor lovely seems the lily nor the rose,
When our white thoughts have all been streaked by sin,
Or guilt hath bathed them in appalling hues
Of its own crimson, such as Nature sheds
On no sweet flowers of hers, though they are bright
On earth as setting suns are bright in heaven.

Look now on Castle Unimore! The stars
Shine clear above its turrets—and the moon
With her mild smiling gladdens all the heaven;
Serene the blue sky—the white clouds serene,
The mountain-tops are as serene as they;
Serenely to the Loch are flowing on
The rivers, and on its serenity
With folded wings sit all the birds of calm;
While many echoes all confused in one,
A sound mysterious coming from afar,
But deepen Nature's universal hush,
A strange song singing in the solitude!

Peace reigneth here—if there on earth be peace;
And peace profound is Nature's holiest joy.
But doth the lady of the castle share
The calm celestial? Doth its blessing sink
Into our Orphans' hearts? Unfold, ye gates!
Ye massy walls, give way, and let the eyes
Of fear, and love, and pity, penetrate
Into the secret hold of misery!

And is the secret hold of misery
So still a place as this? without one sigh—
Without one groan—no voice of weeping heard—
At times no loud lament—She bides not here—
Or if she bide, then misery's self is dead.

Among the moonlight glimmer, lo! the bier
On which the pious lady visiteth

The Oratory on the Isle of Rocks,
Within the Glen of Prayer! A little lamp
Is now seen mingling with the light from heaven
Its own wan lustre, and a face appears,
A face and figure of one lying still,
So very still, from forehead unto feet,
That the soul knows at once it is not sleep.
And she is in her shroud—her thin hands yet
Are folded on her breast, as they were wont
To be when living, and the fingers hold
With unrelaxing clasp the Crucifix;
But they are hidden by that awful veil
Whose moulderings many ages will go on
Invisibly, nor thought of in the air
Where mortals breathe in their forgetfulness
Of all that doth belong to buried death.
Sprinklings of flowers there are upon the shroud
Pale as itself, by whose hands sprinkled there
No need to tell; and, lo! upon the rest
On which the head reposes, there is placed,—
The bright-haired Orphan drew it in her bliss,
Her dark-haired sister hath bestowed it well,—
A picture of her son—her Unimore!

Divine had been that mother's close of life
Illumined by the presence of her son,
Lifting his bright head up above the sea;
And heaven decreed her death should be divine.
She knew not of his sins, for she was blind
To all on earth but that delightful face
Which she had seen in many a hideous grave
Haunting her hourly, night and day, for years;
And deaf to all but that delightful voice
Which from the still dust, or the howling waves,
Had come with all the music loved of yore,
And more than all the music on her soul
Uproused by that maternal ecstasy,
To more than life-prime's passion-power restored.
She loved him more distractedly than e'er
She loved his sire, although all cruel deaths
For him she would have died. A mother's heart
Seems to contain unfathomed depths of love
Beyond the reach and needing not the aid
Of a son's love to feed it, in itself
For ever fed by nature's mystic springs,

In their warm gushings inexhaustible,
And freezing only in the frost of death.

Unquestioning happiness had embraced the boon.
Her speech had been restored that she might breathe
Prayers audible to her own grateful heart,
That she might blessings pour herself could hear
On that undrowned and dazzling head of his
That bore upon it the whole light of heaven.
She knew not of his life upon the sea
Save of his shipwrecks—of his life on land
Save of the cells of his captivities.
That he did love the Orphan-sisters well,
And that they well did love her Unimore,
She knew, and happy often was to think
That he who was a brother to them now
Would be a father when their mother died.
She saw the Naiad dancing out of day,
And had no fears. "Mid-summer gales," he said,
"Blow softly ever mid the Hebrides,
And the young moon some gentle night will see
My bark returning gaily up the glen,
All ended then her ocean-voyagings
In the home-haven of Loch-Unimore."
She told her daughters all that day to leave
Their mother to herself—and when at eve
They had been carried in a dying state
Into the Castle from the Oratory,
That dismal trial had her soul been spared;
For like a shadow on a sunny place
Had death fallen on the quiet of her bier,
And while the Orphans dree'd their agonies
Her heart was hushed—her spirit was in heaven.

'Tis midnight now—and on to-morrow morn
Which is the Sabbath,—they have chosen well
Her burial-day,—soon after dawn the bier
Will be borne down into the Glen of Prayer,
And funeral-service in the Oratory
Read o'er it by the humbled priest, whose age
By one short week appeareth laden sore
With weight worse than of years, the body then
Within the cemetery of the Isle of Rocks
Will be interred, while in the Western Tower
A lonely watch is o'er the Orphans kept

That they may rise not from their restless beds,
And walk in fond delirium to the grave.

Fair ghosts! who through the castle glide by nights,
Haunting its long-drawn corridors obscure,
And always visiting this noiseless room
At the same hour, with love that erreth not,
It is so spiritual, and so true to time
The sacred impulses that reign in sleep!
Fair ghosts of them still living! Not with fear—
Though on their steps mysterious waiteth awe
And wonder—not with fear do we behold
The pale-faced Orphans walking in their dreams!
Unclosed their eyelids, but their eyes as sweet,
Fixed though they be, as when in wakefulness
They used to watch beside their mother's bed!
Deep reconcilement hath now linked their souls,
Else never had their bodies glided thus
In sleep's celestial union, up and down
The castle gloom and glimmer, sanctified
By saintly show of such exceeding love!
Who wrought the shrouds in which ye snow-white walk!
Who for the tomb adorned you with pale flowers
By pity gathered in the shady nooks
Of forest-woods where loveliest leaves are dim,
And wither as they smile—as ye do now,
In dying beauty visiting the dead!
Your own hands wrought the shrouds—your own hands dropt
The rath flowers here and there upon the folds;
As they had done unto the flowery shroud
Of her ye come to kiss now in your sleep.
What reverential kneelings at the bier!
And what love mingled with the reverence!
Divided only by your mother's corse
You kneel, nor yet in that communion know
How near to one another! Unimore
Is now forgotten as he ne'er had been;
His image is permitted not to come
On worship such as this; again your life
In maiden innocence unstained flows on
Through the still world of melancholy dreams;
And in delusion breathed from heaven you weep
For sole sake of your mother, who has died,
You think, without a glimpse of her lost son.

Lo! each alternately a kiss lets fall
On the shut eyes, and cheeks and forehead swathed,
Nor fears the white lips, nor their touch though cold
Refuses, as they seem to meet with theirs
In unexpired affection! But no word
The one or other speaks—serenely mute;
Then satisfied with filial piety,
The kneelers slowly rise up to their feet,
And of each other's presence unaware,
Though all the while their fixed eyes filled with love
Straight on each other's faces seem to look,
First one and then the other on her breast
Doth fold her hands, and gently bows her head
Towards the bier; then ghostlike glide away
Both to their chamber in the Western Tower.
And when they lie down in each other's arms,
May all good angels guard the Orphan's couch!

The moon is in meridian—and in full.
In the whole sky were not a single star,
Midnight would yet be bright; but there are stars
In thousands; all the fixed array is there,
In ranges loftier in infinitude
And loftier as you gaze; while nearer earth
Burn the large planets, objects of our love
Because placed in their beauty more within
The reaches of our souls when roaming heaven.
Look! look unto the castle battlements!
There are the Orphans walking in their sleep.
Dreadless along the precipice they glide
Above the coigns that hide the martin's nest;
But down the depth they gaze not, all their eyes
Are fixed afar upon the starry loch.
See on the Western Tower is sitting lone
The dark-haired Orphan, and that dark hair hangs,
Escaping from the fillet round its braids,
In sable shadows o'er the snow-white shroud.
"Why didst thou leave the Orphans, Unimore?
Thou shouldst have staid with us a little while,
And seen the wretches laid into their graves!"
Lying upon the Eastern battlement,
All heedlessly diffused as if in dreams
Among the sunshine on the greensward brae,
The bright-haired Orphan, with her golden locks
Dim in the piteous moonlight, sings a song

Of human love, as holy as a hymn
Of love divine, and still at every close
Pathetic, breathes the name of Unimore.
At the same time they cease their singing wild,
And passing to and fro along the edge
Of death, unconscious of the abyss profound,
Still as they meet, but meeting never touch,
They blend their mournful voices into one,
Hymning the same strain to the Throne of Grace,
The same strain they did at the Altar sing,
Kneeling together in the Oratory
The day that witnessed Unimore's return.

Mute, motionless the gazers all below;
No stir, no whisper; for they dread to wake
The shrouded sleepers safe now in their sleep,
But were it broken, what a fearful fall
Instant would dash their bodies into death!
There stands apart the melancholy Seer,
And in humiliation there the priest;
There maidens stand who from the mountains came
To tend the dying Orphans, or to weep
Their unavailing tears; and clansmen there
In moody silence thinking on their chief,
And wondering in their feälty that one
So bright and brave, and like his blameless sire,
Could so have sinned; yet after him their prayers
Are sent to guard his ship upon the sea.

Lo! gliding o'er the greensward esplanade
In front of the old castle, side by side,
Yet touching not their figures nor their hands,
Shadowy and strange the shrouded sisters go,
And carry now their snow-white beauty dim
Away to the dark woods! Then disappear,
Each by a well-known pathway of her own,
Into the Glen of Prayer. All follow them
With reverential footsteps stilled by fear
And by love hastened, down the shaggy depth,
At whose base roars a river bridged with trees
Storm-laid across the chasms, by their old roots
Held fast, and on the opposing precipice
Green their top branches, living bridges bright
With mossy verdure, but their shaking stems
Hanging unledged o'er foamy waterfalls.

A perilous place! But oft their sportive feet
Have glided o'er these bridges, as the fawns
Fearless behind their dam, when she instructs
Their steps in danger, ere the hunter's horn
Startle her lonely lair; and they have learnt
To look down o'er the chasms, like youngling birds
All unafraid within their hanging nests
Above the spray of cataracts; their eyes
Familiar with the foam that floats below
As with the clouds that sail along the sky.
And on these bridges oft hath Unimore
Led them along, a sister on each side,
For so he then would call them—and sometimes
There glided with him only one, alone
With her destroyer,—then she was his bride!

The group is gathered on the Isle of Rocks;
And lo! across the giant pine-tree flung
From cliff to cliff across a chasm, midway
Between the blue air and the water black,
The Orphans walk, and as they walk they meet,
And meeting they awake. The dismal noise
Below them of the boiling cataract,
The horrid glimmer of the swimming cliffs,
And dim affrightments of the hideous chasm
Enveloping their being all at once
In what now seemeth death, a shrilly shriek
From both their bosoms wrench insanely out,
"O God of mercy—save us, Jesu! save!"
And yet each fearing for the other more
Than for herself, with mutual clasp they clutch
Each other's bodies in a last embrace,
And from the pine-tree swerving, not a hand
Stretched from on high to save, into the pool
Raging below they drop, and whirled a while
Like weeds or branches round about on foam,
They disappear, while all the Isle of Rocks
Is one wild outcry vainly piercing heaven!

Despair may seek to lift the coffin-lid
As if it madly dreamt life might be there!
Despair may go into the mouldy vault
And strive to think the echo of its feet
The stirring of the shrouded. But Despair

May shoot not down that chasm its blinded eyes,
And know not that the Orphans are with God.

There is no shrieking now; upon their knees
Around the kneeling priest drop one and all;
All but the Seer—and he his withered hands
Uplifts, and with wild wavings down the Glen
Motions the clansmen, who arise and go
Where'er he wills; for he obeys his dreams,
And they believe that in the wilderness
Dreams shadow the whole imagery of death.
The river, splintered on the Isle of Rocks,
Through separate chasms goes boiling, all unseen;
But reappearing as the Isle slopes down
Into a sylvan scene, where all is peace,
Gently it flows along the cemetery
That in the quiet water hangs its tombs.
Thither they go, and on the bank sit down
Like men in idlesse gazing on the foam;
When lo! faint-whitening in a lucid pool
With a strong current, moving slowly on
All eyes at once behold the blended shrouds!
No need to drag them from the water—they
Are on the silver sand. With tenderest hands
They lift the Orphans and their bodies lay,
Weeping, for men are not ashamed to weep
When pity bids them, on a greensward bed
Warmed by the earliest touches of the dawn,
For all the stars have faded, and the moon
Is gone, although they knew it not till now,
And almost perfect day has filled the skies.

All there have often seen the face of death,
And almost always 'tis the face of peace.
But this is not the face of death and peace,
It is the face of an immortal joy.
Fear left it falling o'er the precipice,
And Love bestowed her beauty on the eyes
Though they are shut, and on the lips, though they
Are white almost as forehead or as breast,
And these are like the snow. One face it seems;
While each is lovely, both the calm of heaven!

Where art thou, Unimore? Thou art forgiven
By them who died for thee—Oh! may thy sins

Find mercy, though no mercy thou didst show
Unto these loving Orphan-innocents!
Perhaps, even now, a dream assails thy Ship
Showing this sorry sight—this greensward bed—
These bodies—of these bright, these sable locks
Most mournful mixture—this death-fast embrace
Not even to be unlocked within the tomb.
"Judge not, lest thou be judged!" the Scriptures say.
Lodged in that mystery is celestial light;
Let man seek in the Bible and he finds
What mercy means, and what is conscience,
And what it is that puts out or that dims
That light which is a law to all the race;
For evil-thoughts and evil-doings, all
That is by God forbidden, bring on death
On those we love, as if we hated them;
Nor halts the sinner upon shore or sea
Till he lets perish his immortal soul!

Down from the castle comes the lady's bier;
And all together shall the three repose
Within one grave. Sleep-walking is there none,—
Though superstition sees it in the gloom
And tells of unlaid ghosts,—when "dust to dust"
Hath once been said by holy lips, and sealed
The tomb's mouth with a melancholy stone
Inscribed, when Love has sacred leisure found
From weeping over it, by moonlight nights,
With Grief and Pity.

The whole clan is there;
And now the funeral-rites are all performed;
And dying daisies, with their whitening leaves
Ere mid-day to be withered, on the turf
Are almost all that tells it was disturbed,
So perfect is the peace that seals the grave,
And gives the sleepers to oblivion.
Oblivion! no—the memory of their lives,
So innocent that were and beautiful,
And to the brim filled full of happiness
Till of a sudden mortal misery came
With no forewarning, and dissolved the dream
In cold but welcome death, the memory
Of lives so lovely and exceeding pure,
When all the old heads stooping there have gone

Down to the dust, will in the breasts survive
Of all these mournful maidens and these youths
Mingling their hearts, as they will sometimes do
When meeting on the mountains they deplore
Long afterwards the affliction that befell
In that lone burial-place; they will recite
In Sabbath quietude the tale of tears,
Unto their children's children, weeping eyes
For many a generation witnessing,
For them who live and die in piety,
How still and strong the sanctity of grief!

And thus the Orphans from their graves will breathe
A blessing o'er their own sweet wilderness;
And if their ghosts before the misty sight
Of pity-wakened Fancy on the moors
In melancholy moonlight seem to glide,
And o'er the mountains, when the stars are dim
In dewy mist, and all the tender skies
Benignly smile in sympathy with souls
Blest with a cherished sorrow, in such robes
As sainted spirits are believed to wear
When singing round the Throne, all spotless white,
The Orphan-sisters o'er the solitude
Will holiness diffuse, love without fear,
Sent down by Mercy silent messengers,
To all that suffer but commit no wrong,
Of heavenly comfort, and to all that sin,
Of pardon, if that they repentant be,
Pardon through Jesus, and forgiveness wide
As God's ethereal house, Infinitude.

No longer linger on the Orphans' grave,
Ye virgin mourners! For their mother weep
No more! Earthborn our thoughts of space and time,
Partaking of our prison! But the light
Shot down to us by sun or star is slow
When dreamt of with the spirit's instant gleam
From death to life—its change from earth to heaven.
A moment's bliss within those shining courts
Is in itself long ages—such their bliss
For whom you now are blindly shedding tears.
The morning-dews have melted all away,
So let your tears! Oh! what a joyful burst
Of woodland melodies o'erflows the glen!

Rejoicing nature o'er the cemetery
Pours light and music—why so sad your souls?
The day-spring from on high doth visit them,
A still small voice is whispering—Peace! Peace! Peace!

VISION TENTH.

RETRIBUTION.

Along Imagination's air serene
And on her sea serene we fly or float,
Like birds of calm that with the moonlight glide
Sometimes upon the wing, sometimes with plumes
Folded amid the murmur of the waves,
Far up among the mountains to the head
Of some great glen, enamoured of the green
And flowery solitude of inland peace.
Yet there the birds of calm soon find that mists,
And clouds, and storms, and hurricanes belong
Not to the sea alone; as we have found
That, in the quiet regions of the soul,
Removed, as we did dream, from sorrow far
And sin, there yet are doleful visitings
Of sin and sorrow both. But as the birds,
Returning to the ocean, take with them
All the sweet memories only, and forget
The blasts that to their native haunts again
Bore them away reluctant, nor do fear
Another time to let themselves be borne
On the same waftings back to the same place
Where they had wheeled about so happily,
Or on the greensward walked among the lambs;
Even so do we on our return to life,
Tumultuous even far more than is the sea,
Take with us all the sweetest memories
Of that still place which we had visited
In our calm-loving dreams, forgotten all,
Or but remembered dimly, the distress
That even there did come to trouble us;
Nor loth, but earnest, even most passionate
To wing our way back to the solitude
Once more, and there relapse into the bliss
That once so softly breathed o'er innocence.

Back through the glimmering regions of the past
Then let us fly again—and on a time
Take up our visionary residence,
Half-way between this glorious summer-day
Lying refulgent on Winander's waves,
And isles, and shores, and woods, and groves, and all
Her shadowy mountains well beloved of heaven,
And that sad morn but sweet when we beheld
The Orphan sisters with their mother laid
Beyond the reach of sorrow, which had found
Their dwelling out, though it was far remote
And solitary, amid Morven's glens
O'er which the lonely eagle loved to sail.

Again we sit in the dim world of dreams.
O'er Morven forty years have come and gone
Since, on the morning of that funeral,
The Isle of Rocks within the Glen of Prayer
Beheld the gathered clan of Unimore
Upon their knees around the Oratory,
Beseeching heaven to take into its rest
The spirits of the buried. Time and tide
Have washed away, like weeds upon the sands,
Crowds of the olden life's memorials,
And mid the mountains you as well might seek
For the lone site of Fancy's filmy dreams.
Towers have decayed, and mouldered from the cliffs,
Or their green age or grey has helped to build
New dwellings sending up their household smoke
From treeless places once inhabited
But by the secret sylvans. On the moors
The pillar-stone, reared to perpetuate
The fame of some great battle, or the power
Of storied necromancer in the wilds,
Among the wide change on the heather-bloom
By power more wondrous wrought than his, its name
Has lost, or fallen itself has disappeared;
No broken fragment suffered to impede
The glancing ploughshare. All the ancient woods
Are thinned, and let in floods of daylight now,
Then dark and dern as when the Druids lived.
Narrowed is now the red-deer's forest-reign;
The royal race of eagles is extinct;
But other changes than on moor and cliff
Have tamed the aspect of the wilderness.

The simple system of primeval life,
Simple but stately, hath been broken down;
The clans are scattered, and the chieftain's power
Is dead, or dying—but a name—though yet
It sometimes stirs the desert. On the winds
The tall plumes wave no more—the tartan green
With fiery streaks among the heather-bells
Now glows unfrequent—and the echoes mourn
The silence of the music that of old
Kept war-thoughts stern amid the calm of peace.
Yet to far battle-plains still Morven sends
Her heroes, and still glittering in the sun,
Or blood-dimmed, her dread line of bayonets
Marches with loud shouts straight to victory.
A softened radiance now floats o'er her glens;
No rare sight now upon her sea-arm lochs
The sail oft veering up the solitude;
And from afar the noise of life is brought
Within the thunder of her cataracts.
These will flow on for ever; and the crests,
Gold-tipt by rising and by setting suns,
Of her old mountains inaccessible,
Glance down their scorn for ever on the toils
That load with harvests now the humbler hills
Now shorn of all their heather-bloom, and green
Or yellow as the gleam of Lowland fields.
And bold hearts in broad bosoms still are there
Living and dying peacefully; the huts
Abodes are still of high-souled poverty;
And underneath their lintels beauty stoops
Her silken-snooded head, when singing goes
The maiden to her father at his work
Among the woods, or joins the scanty line
Of barley-reapers on their narrow ridge
In some small field among the pastoral braes.
Still fragments dim of ancient poetry
In melancholy music down the glens
Go floating; and from shieling roofed with boughs
And turf-walled, high up in some lonely place
Where flocks of sheep are nibbling the sweet grass
Of midsummer, and browsing on the plants
On the cliff-mosses a few goats are seen
Among their kids, you hear sweet melodies
Attuned to some traditionary tale
By young wife sitting all alone, aware

From shadow on the mountain-horologe
Of the glad hour that brings her husband home
Before the gloaming, from the far-off moor
Where the black cattle feed—there all alone
She sits and sings, except that on her knees
Sleeps the sweet offspring of their faithful loves.

What change hath fallen on castle Unimore?
Hath her last chieftain been forgotten quite,
His Lady-Mother once to Morven dear,
The Orphans whom her bard did celebrate
By names he borrowed from the lavish sky
That loved its kindred loveliness to lend
To the fair spirits of the wilderness?

Behold the Glen of Prayer, the Isle of Rocks,
The Oratory, and the Place of Tombs!
And a small congregation gathered there
As if it were the Sabbath, and the bell
Among the silent mountains had been chiming
The peaceful people to the house of God.
O sacred Pity! or a holier name
Shall we unblamed bestow on Thee who art
No other than Religion, when the soul
Receives thee coming like the dewy dawn
Through dimness waxing bright? Thou dost preserve
The pleasant memories of all mournful things,
Making sweet Grief immortal, when she takes
The placid look and gentle character
Of Sorrow, softening every sight she sees
Through the slight mist of something scarcely tears.
The fate of the fair Orphans has become
A holy legend now; for few survive
Who saw them buried, and tradition tells
The outline only of their story, drawn
In colours dim, but still the hues of heaven.
Calm anniversary of a troubled day!
There sit the people, some upon the tombs,
Upon the turf-heaps some, and the low wall
That winds its ivy round the burial-place
Is covered here and there—a cheerful show;
As if it were some annual holiday,
Or festival devoted unto mirth
Who only waits the to-fall of the night

To wake the jocund sound of dance and song.
And yet o'er all a shade of melancholy
Seems breathing, more than what may appertain
To these still woods.

Lo! formed in fair array,
A band of maidens in their best attire,—
Such as they wear when walking with a bride
Back from the Chapel to her father's house
Which she must now be leaving, or when all
The happy congregation bless the babe
Held gently up to the Baptismal font,—
One tomb encircle, by itself aloof
A little way from all the rest, one tomb
That in the very heart of sunshine sleeps;
And hark! they scatter over it, than flowers
More sweet, the holy harmony of hymns!
There lie the unforgotten Orphans—there
Lieth their mother's dust. The marble shows
Their sacred names bedimmed with weather-stains,
But still distinct, for the defacing moss
Is suffered not to gather on the lines
Oft looked on reverentially by eyes
That sometimes let the quiet tear-drops fall
Upon the holy text that strews the grave.

The hymns are silent on the lips that sang
So dolefully, but Echo in the cliff
Warbles one moment the concluding strain;
And now the birds, that all the while were mute
On hearing of that plaintive melody,
Take up the dirge to tunings of their own
Inspired by fancy with an alien woe,
For glad are they within their summer-bowers;
Though they too have their sorrows, when their nests
During short absence sometimes disappear
With all the nestlings, and the grove is pierced
With rueful cries of restless agony
Fluttering from tree to tree, and sore amazed
In instinct's passion at the grievous loss
That leaves the bare bough unendurable;
Till far away the shrieking parents fly,
And sit down mute upon some desert-stone,
As dimly sad as human wretchedness!
Laden with old age, lo! a white-haired man,

An unknown stranger coming from afar,
Enters the burial-place, nor from the ground
Uplifteth yet his eyes. But now their lids
Are raised, exposing melancholy orbs
And dim just like the blind's. "Show me their tomb!"
He seems to see it; and he lays him down
On the white slab in all his misery,
Moaning their names, and with his withered lips
Kissing the letters, but without a tear.
Long has it been since that old phantom wept.
His brain is dry, and in those shrunken hands
Scarce creeps the livid blood—and now a voice
Hollowly utters, "I am Unimore!"

Clansmen, behold your chief! What think ye now,
Old men who walked with Unimore of old,
Following his high plumes o'er the mountain-cliffs,
What think ye now of Morven's Morning-star?
These locks of miserable snow did once
Dim the dark purple on the raven's wing;
That crawling form, like to a young oak-tree
When sunshine smites its glory, once did stand
Magnificent; in feeble hollowness
Expires the voice that on the battle-deck
At head of all his boarders, fear and death
Oft scattered, when, her bloody flag hung high,
The black Sea-Eagle thundered o'er the foam—
Clansmen, behold your chief!

A few old men,
True to the sacred love that burned of yore,
And faithful to all ancient memories,
Walk slowly towards him, and kneel down mute
Beside the wearied wanderer who hath found
At last a place of rest. Sighs, sobs, and groans
Go echoing round and round the Isle of Rocks.
"And is it thus our Unimore returns
To his own Morven! better had the sea
Swallowed his ship, than thus to send our chief
Back to his home, which must now be the grave!"

No words the phantom hears; his soul has gone
A long long journey, back to that bright month
Of wicked love and fatal, when he wooed

And won the Orphans, miserable brides,
Yet sinless, by their nuptials both undone.
Dim are his eyes, but now they penetrate
The marble and the earth beneath, and see
What is no longer there, the very shrouds
Flower-woven, and the lovely faces wan,
Looking as they did look that sunny morn
The sisters perished, walking in their sleep.
Swept from his memory many a once-deep trace
By passion and by trouble graven there
As if by eating fire ; but all the lines
Of all that love disastrous yet are left,
Of all that guilt inexpiable, of all
That sin that seemeth far beyond the reach
Of Heaven's own mercy. As if yesterday
Had been their day of burial, he beholds
The open grave, and he the thunder hears
With hollow peals within the grave, when falls
The first dread shovelling in of dust to dust,
That to the ears of stricken agony
Doth to its centre shake the solid earth.

The story of their death, like wintry wail
Of winds at midnight round the Pirate's ship,
Had access found unto the solitudes
Of the wide sea. For dire catastrophes
Make themselves known in many wondrous ways,
Sometimes by single syllables, that come
With pauses long, like tollings of a knell ;
Sometimes in revelations made in dreams.
If waking ears be deaf, or if the air
Bring not the ghastly tidings, Conscience
Confounds us with the truth in troubled sleep.

"I smote their breasts—I broke their hearts—I
dashed
Their spotless bodies o'er the cataract—
I murdered them in all their innocence !—
The sorrow that belongs of right to Sin
I shot into the soul of Piety !
Stealing upon the Orphans at their prayers,
And violating the celestial calm
Which even I, an atheist, felt was breathed
From heaven, and from the power that reigns in
heaven !"

No pity needeth Penitence, for soft
And sweet, like distant music, are her dreams;
But all the tears that pity hath, too few
To give unto Remorse, that swalloweth up
Its own, nor in them any blessing knows
Though poured in floods, all falling fruitlessly
As tropic torrents on the desert sands.
Many beseechings strive to pacify
The Wretchedness that once was Unimore;
But crazed, they soon perceive, by misery crazed,
Is now the old man's brain. Wild wanderings take
His dim eyes up and down the Isle of Rocks,
And up and down all o'er the Glen of Prayer,
As if pursuing phantoms.

"Look not so!
Oh! hide from me your melancholy eyes,
And all their meek upbraidings! Not from heaven
Should spirits thus come upon a sinner's curse,
To make the misery more than he can bear,
And misery much already hath he borne.
Ye from your bliss have seen my mortal woe,
Shipwrecked and sold to slavery, and ye ken
What I do not, how it did come that chains
Were round about my body and my limbs
For many sunless, many moonless years,
In a strange place—it seemed to be a cell,
Sometimes as sultry as the desert, cold
Sometimes as ice; and strangers passing by
Did shuddering say—'The wretch is still insane!'
Save! save the Orphan-sisters! See! they stand
Upon the Pine-Tree bridge. I hear them cry
For succour and for help on Unimore.
And I will save you, for these arms are strong,
And fleet these limbs as red-deer's on the hill!"

Lo! lifting up his frame, almost as straight
And tall as when in his majestic prime,
A stately spectre, shattered by the blows
Of time and trouble, misery and despair,
And, worst of all sin-smiters, gaunt remorse,
Totters away among the tombs and out
Of the hushed cemetery in among the woods,—
The chief of Morven, princely Unimore!
A shadow now! a phantom! ghost, or dream!

Lo ! on the Pine-Tree bridge the spectre stands !
Outstretched his arms as in the act to save
The visionary Orphans ! Stormy years
Have preyed upon the stem of that fallen Pine
Since last it shook beneath his tread—the lightnings
Have smitten it, and o'er that Bridge the roe
Would walk not, instinct-taught that it is frail
And hung on danger. With a splintering crash
It snaps asunder, frush as willow-wand,
And with the phantoms of the Orphans down
Precipitate with the sheer cataract
Into the mortal depth sinks Unimore.

EDDERLINE'S DREAM.

CANTO FIRST.

Castle-Oban is lost in the darkness of night,
For the moon is swept from the starless heaven,
And the latest line of lowering light
That lingered on the stormy even,
A dim-seen line, half cloud, half wave,
Hath sunk into the weltering grave.
Castle-Oban is dark without and within,
And downwards to the fearful din,
Where Ocean with his thunder-shocks
Stuns the green foundation rocks,
Through the grim abyss that mocks his eye
Oft hath the eerie watchman sent
A shuddering look, a shivering sigh,
From the edge of the howling battlement!

Therein is a lonesome room,
Undisturbed as some old tomb
That, built within a forest glen,
Far from feet of living men,
And sheltered by its black pine-trees,
From sound of rivers, lochs, and seas,
Flings back its archèd gateway tall,
At times to some great funeral.
Noiseless as a central cell
In the bosom of a mountain,
Where the fairy people dwell,
By the cold and sunless fountain!
Breathless as a holy shrine
When the voice of psalms is shed!
And there upon her stately bed,
While her raven locks recline
O'er an arm more pure than snow,
Motionless beneath her head,—

And through her large fair eyelids shine
Shadowy dreams that come and go,
By too deep bliss disquieted,—
There sleeps in love and beauty's glow,
The high-born Lady Edderline.

Lo! the lamp's wan fitful light,
Glide, gliding round the golden rim!
Restored to life, now glancing bright,
Now just expiring, faint and dim,
Like a spirit loth to die,
Contending with its destiny.
All dark! a momentary veil
Is o'er the sleeper! now a pale
Uncertain beauty glimmers faint,
And now the calm face of the saint
With every feature reappears,
Celestial in unconscious tears!
Another gleam! how sweet the while,
Those pictured faces on the wall
Through the midnight silence smile;
Shades of fair ones, in the aisle
Vaulted the castle cliffs below,
To nothing mouldered, one and all
Ages long ago!

From her pillow, as if driven
By an unseen demon's hand
Disturbing the repose of heaven,
Hath fallen her head! The long black hair,
From the fillet's silken band
In dishevelled masses riven,
Is streaming downwards to the floor.
Is the last convulsion o'er?
And will that length of glorious tresses,
So laden with the soul's distresses,
By those fair hands in morning light,
Above those eyelids opening bright,
Be braided never more?
No! the lady is not dead,
Though flung thus wildly o'er her bed;
Like a wrecked corse upon the shore,
That lies until the morning brings
Searchings, and shrieks, and sorrowings;

Or haply, to all eyes unknown,
Is borne away without a groan,
On a chance plank, 'mid joyful cries
Of birds that pierce the sunny skies
With seaward dash, or in calm bands
Parading o'er the silvery sands,
Or 'mid the lovely flush of shells,
Pausing to burnish crest or wing,
No fading foot-mark see that tells
Of that poor unremembered thing!
O dreadful is the world of dreams,
When all that world a chaos seems
Of thoughts so fixed before!
When heaven's own face is tinged with blood!
And friends cross o'er our solitude,
Now friends of ours no more!
Or, dearer to our hearts than ever,
Keep stretching forth, with vain endeavour,
Their pale and palsied hands,
To clasp us phantoms, as we go
Along the void like drifting snow,
To far-off nameless lands!
Yet all the while we know not why,
Nor where those dismal regions lie,
Half hoping that a curse so deep
And wild can only be in sleep,
And that some overpowering scream
Will break the fetters of the dream,
And let us back to waking life,
Filled though it be with care and strife;
Since there at least the wretch can know
The meanings on the face of woe,
Assured that no mock shower is shed
Of tears upon the real dead,
Or that his bliss, indeed, is bliss,
When bending o'er the death-like cheek
Of one who scarcely seems alive,
At every cold but breathing kiss,
He hears a saving angel speak—
"Thy Love will yet revive!"

Eager to speak—but in terror mute,
With chainèd breath and snow-soft foot,
The gentle maid whom that lady loves,
Like a gleam of light through the darkness moves,

And leaning o'er her rosy breath,
Listens in tears—for sleep—or death!
Then touches with a kiss her breast—
"O Lady, this is ghastly rest!
Awake! awake, for Jesus' sake!"
Far in her soul a thousand sighs
Are madly struggling to get free;
But that soul is like a frozen sea
That silent lies in ice and snow,
Though the deep waters boom below!
And yet a clear and silvery well,
By moonlight glimmering in its cell;
A river that doth gently sing
Around the cygnet's folded wing;
A billow on the summer deep
That flows, yet scarcely seems to flow,
Not calmer than that lady's sleep,
One blessèd hour ago!

So gently as a shepherd lifts
From a wreath of drifted snow,
A lamb that vainly on a rock
Up among the mountain clefts,
Bleats unto the heedless flocks
Sunwards feeding far below.
Even so gently Edith takes
The sighing dreamer to her breast,
Loving kisses soft and meek
Breathing o'er bosom, brow, and cheek,
For their own fair, delightful sakes,
And lays her lovely limbs at rest;
When, stirring like the wondrous flower
That blossoms at the midnight hour,
And only then—the Lady wakes!
From the heavy load set free
Of that fearful fantasy,
Edderline lifts up her head,
And, in the fitful lustre lent
By the lone lamp, gazing round,
As listening for some far-off sound,
Leans it on her lily hand,
In beautiful bewilderment!
"Am I in some foreign land?
And who art thou that takest thy stand
Like a minister of grace

By the prisoner's haunted bed?
Walking mute thy nightly round!
Oh! speak—thy voice was like a sound
Elsewhere beloved! that pitying face
Reminds me of the dead!"

Again she hears her Edith speak—
Doubt, fear, and trouble leave her cheek,
And suddenly returning
Remembrances all bright and fair,
Above the darkness of despair,
Like morning lights are burning:
Even as a gloomy mountain lake
From its dark sleep at once doth break,
And while afar the mists are driven,
In new-born beauty laughs to heaven!
So rising slowly from her couch,
Like a nun in humblest guise,
With one light and careless touch,
O'er the snow above her eyes
Her long dishevelled hair she tricks,
And with low sobs of gratitude
To Him who chased her dreams away,
Down kneels she in the solitude,
And with raised hand and eyes doth pray
Before the holy Crucifix.

"My soul hath been disquieted,
And weltered with the weltering dead!
Floating all night with a corse
Over high blood-crested waves,
Or driven by a fiendish force
Down into unfathomed caves:
Blessed be God who rescued me
From that wild world of misery!
Oh! it is heaven to wake again,
To know that I have wept in vain!
That life yet warms that noble breast
Which I in mortal pangs carest,
Hurried along the foaming path,
In face of horror, fear, and wrath!
Whether his ship in roaring motion
Roll tempest-driven o'er the ocean,
Or rocking lie in pleasant sleep,
Anchored beneath the palmy steep,

Temper, O God! the sun and air
To him, my home-bound Mariner;
And gently breathe the midnight dew
O'er him and all his gallant crew!"

The lamp is dead, but the morning peep
Faintly dawning far away,
Slowly, slowly wins its way
Through the window buried deep
In its gloomy glen of stone—
A little point that shines afar
Like a dim-discovered star,
When other lights in heaven are none.
To that little cheerful shine
Turn the eyes of Edderline;
And as a cloud, that long hath lain
Black amid the sullen sky,
Suddenly dissolves in rain,
And stricken by the sunlight, shines
With a thousand gorgeous lines,
Blended and braided gloriously—
So fair, so pure, so bright appears
That kneeling Lady's face of tears,
For the rain is fallen, the gloom is gone,
And her soul hath risen with the sun.

Hark! the martlet twittering by
The crevice, while her twittering brood
Beneath some shadowy wall-flower lie,
In the high air of solitude!
She alone, sky-loving bird,
In that lofty clime is heard;
But loftier far from cliff remote,
Up springs the eagle, like a thought,
And poised in heaven's resplendent zone,
Gazes a thousand fathom down,
While his wild and fitful cry,
Blends together sea and sky.
And a thousand songs, I trow,
From the wakened world below
Are ringing through the morning glow.
Music is there on the shore,
Softening sweet the billowy roar;
For bold and fair in every weather,
The sea-mews shrill now flock together,

Or wheeling off in lonely play,
Carry their pastimes far away,
To little isles and rocks of rest,
Scattered o'er the ocean's breast,
Where these glad creatures build their nest.
Now hymns are heard at every fountain
Where the land-birds trim their wings,
And boldly booming up the mountain,
Where the dewy heath-flower springs,
Upon the freshening gales of morn
Showers of headlong bees are borne,
Till far and wide with harp and horn
The balmy desert rings !

This the pensive Lady knows,
So round her lovely frame she throws
The cloud-like float of her array,
And with a blessing and a prayer
She fixeth in her raven hair
The jewel that her lover gave,
The night before he crossed the wave
To kingdoms far away.
Soft steps are winding down the stair,
And now beneath the morning air
Her breast breathes strong and free ;
The sun in his prime glorious hour
Is up, and with a purple shower
Hath bathed the billowy sea.

Lo ! morning's dewy hush divine
Hath calmed the eyes of Edderline !
Shaded by the glooms that fall
From the old grey castle-wall ;
Or, from the glooms emerging bright,
Cloud-like walking through the light,
She sends the blessing of her smiles
O'er dancing waves and steadfast isles,
And, creature though she be of earth,
Heaven feels the beauty of her mirth,
How seraph-like the silent greeting,
Streaming from her dark blue eyes,
At their earliest matin-meeting
Upwards to the dark-blue skies !
Quickly glancing, gliding slowly,
Child of mirth or melancholy,

As her midnight dream again,
Of the hushed or roaring main,
Comes and goes across her brain.
Now she sees the ship returning,
Every mast with ensigns burning
Star-bright o'er the cloud of sails,
As, queen-like, down the green sea-vales
She stoops, or o'er the mountains green
Reascending like a queen.
Glad the heart of hoary ocean
In the beauty of her motion!
Now through midnight's deepest noon,
Howling to the wild monsoon,
She sees God's anger flash around her,
And the glorious vessel founder
To one vain signal-gun;
While in the lightning's ghastly glow
The shipless ocean rolls below,
As in the mid-day sun!

Far, far below, in rocky cell
Doth a seër-hermit dwell.
In solitude and in despair
He sits, with long, black, rusty hair,
Face dim as death, and his fixed eye
Red-flashing with futurity.
A holy madman! with no chain
But those forged in his burning brain—
Shuddering, close beside his feet,
To see the frequent winding-sheet—
Spite of the water's din, to hear
Steps trampling grave-wards with a bier—
Or like a sweep of wintry weather,
Wailing at midnight o'er the heather,
Cloud-coronachs that wildly rise
When far away a chieftain dies.

Down—downwards to his savage cave,
By steps the goat doth almost fear
To lead her little kids to browse
On wild-herb that there thinly grows,
'Mid spray-showers from the dashing wave,
So dreadful 'tis the din to hear,
The Lady with a quaking prayer,
Descends, as if upon the air,

Like sea-mew with white rise and fall,
Floating o'er a waterfall !
And now doth trembling Edith wait
Reluctant at the closing gate,
And wipes away her tears ;
For the Lady motions her to stay,
Then with a wan smile sinks away,
And, ghost-like, disappears !

A RECOMMENDATION

OF THE

STUDY OF THE REMAINS OF ANCIENT GRECIAN AND ROMAN ARCHITECTURE, SCULPTURE, AND PAINTING.

Though oft in Britain's Isle the breathing bust
To fame consign the patriot-hero's dust,
And conquerors waked to mimic life again
In imaged triumph thunder o'er the main ;
Though speaks each mould by Flaxman's genius wrought,
The glow of fancy, or the stretch of thought ;
And grace obeys fair Damer's soft control
Through many a varied lineament of soul ;
Yet, oh ! unlike each nobler Grecian form,
With strength majestic, or with beauty warm,
Where all her mingling charms Expression poured,
Admired by Valour, or by Love adored.

Lo ! where retiring Venus shuns the eye,
And beauty vies with bashful majesty !
There mortal charms in loveliest union shine,
And all the Goddess crowns the bright design.
Thou, too, half hid beneath thy dripping veil
Of many a moistened tress, Urania, hail !
To thee that dubious mien the sculptor gave,
Fearing the shore, though shrinking from the wave.
Or see where, graceful bending o'er his bow,
The quivered God's exulting features glow,
As, trusting to his arm's unerring might,
His look pursues the distant arrow's flight.
But shut, oh ! shut the eye, where mid yon fold
Of crested snakes Laocoon writhes enrolled,

And drinks with tortured ear his children's cries,
Embittering death's convulsive agonies!

Rise, slumbering Genius, and with throbbing heart
Adore these trophies of unrivalled art,
Till each fine grace that gifted Masters knew,
In fairy vision floating o'er thy view,
Perfection crown once more the living stone,
And Britain claim a Phidias of her own.

Not such the hopes that blessed the enthusiast's dream
While sad it wanders o'er each faded gleam,
That dimly shows to Painting's Muse was given
The sevenfold radiance of refulgent heaven,
When Genius stole the colours of the sun,
And poured them o'er the wreath that Valour won!

Then turn the eye, where, spurning time's control,
Art stamps on stone the triumphs of the soul;
With trembling awe survey each hallowed fane
Ennobling Greece 'mid Desolation's reign.
Each pillared portico and swelling dome,
Proud o'er the prostrate majesty of Rome!
While o'er the scene each mouldering temple throws,
Sacred to Genius, undisturbed repose;
Through twilight's doubtful gloom his eye shall trace
The column's height enwreathed with clustering grace;
The light-arched roof, the portal stretching wide,
Triumphal monuments in armèd pride;
Till bold conceptions bursting on his heart,
His skill shall grasp the inmost soul of art;
And Fame's green isle her cloud-capt towers display,
Where grace and grandeur rule with equal sway.

THE END.

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